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Nonviolent jihad: an immanent critique

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Nonviolent Jihad: An Immanent Critique

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DEDICATION

For Tarek el-Tayeb Mohamed Bouazizi, martyr (*shadid*)

The Prophet said, "A most excellent *jihad* is when one speaks a word of truth in the presence of a tyrannical ruler."[1]

[1] Narrated by Abu Sa'id al-Khudri in Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi (Sunan Abu Dawud, Hadith 4344).

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ABSTRACT

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Nonviolent Jihad: An Immanent Critique
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In pursuit of radical democracy, against the juggernaut of modern liberalism, this thesis attempts an unusual resuscitation of an Islamic nonviolence by engaging in bridge-building and mutual translation between the principled nonviolence of Mahatma Gandhi and the so-called "political Islam" of Sayyid Qutb. By means of the method of immanent critique, this thesis employs the "anthropological skepticism" of Talal Asad to critique the secularist notions of agency employed by these seminal and polarizing figures, revealing the centrality of "lack" to both ideologies. It otherwise self-consciously adopts the essentialisms used by and against these ideologies to attempt to lay the groundwork for an edifice with maximum rhetorical appeal.

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PROLOGUE

December 17, 2010 was the last straw for Tunisian fruit vendor Mohamed Bouazizi. His scale and his fruit, which he had bought on credit, were seized because he had refused to pay the latest bribe/fine, and he was reportedly beaten. Mr. Bouazizi's attempt to appeal to the governor was unsuccessful. Many Tunisians could identify with the humiliations he suffered. Soon afterwards, Mr. Bouazizi purchased paint thinner, doused himself with it in front of a government building, and set himself on fire.[2]

The protests, which began just hours later, would have perhaps been less impassioned had Mr. Bouazizi not been so popular—if he had not been so charitable to the poor, or if there had been less official inertia and heavy-handedness. Mr. Bouazizi died eighteen days after he set himself on fire. Ten days after his death, Tunisian president Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia. Cascading self-immolations and protests followed, triggering upheavals across North Africa and the Middle East. Al-Jazeera, among others, highlighted "poverty, unemployment and frustration" as the root causes of the self-immolations and the protests. Mr. Bouazizi's mother, however, insisted that her son took the actions he did because of humiliation, not because of poverty or unemployment.[3]

In a similar situation in Egypt just a few weeks later, on January 17, the New York Times reported that Abdo Abdel-Moneim Hamadah lit himself on fire because of the abrupt denial of his right to state-subsidized bread. His actions also seemed to be motivated by dignity and humiliation. As the New York Times reported, "Mr. Hamadah snapped after a government official agreed to give him back the bread, not because he was entitled to it, but as charity."[4]

What do the immolations show? They show the truth of otherwise concealed violence, injustice and brutality: the structural violence of a system descended from a colonial days. Mohamed's burning, in a short time, captured the consumption of the lives of so many in the Middle East, and around the world, burned like dung or trash to fuel the consumption of the wealthy. And also the earth as a whole, burning,

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[2] Hafez Ghanem, *The Arab Spring Five Years Later,* Volume One: Toward Greater Inclusiveness (Brookings Institution Press, 2018), 63.
[3] Mona el-Naggar, "Self-Immolation Protests Spread Across North Africa," *New York Times*, January 17, 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/18/world/africa/18egypt.html.
[4] Ibid.

consumed by modern liberal capitalism. But also, hopefully, Mohamed's self-immolation was able to serve a beacon, an alchemical fire jumping between video screens.

It is tempting to view Mohamed's immolation as a sort of text: the "meanings" we discover might share some of the same semantic range as a reading of Christ's crucifixion, or the martyrdom of Hussein, ranging from "redemptive suffering" to "humiliating masochism"[5]—the latter characterization calling to mind Nietzsche's condemnation of Christianity as a "slave morality" fed by ressentiment. But from another view, it is possible to discover that such a procedure, of reading textual meanings off of behaviors or traditions, and processing them with one of the many ways we process texts, enacts some of the same sort of violence that consumed Mohamed. It can enact the stance of a sovereign who sees, knows and decides.

Mohamed's self-immolation can evoke horror, including a horror of identification for many millions: identification with the "airless cage of poverty," death by a thousand cuts, and "death so slow none dare call it murder." But there is a horrible abjection possible, not completely dependent on such material bases, the polar opposite of the sovereign who sees, knows and decides. This humiliation, in which there seems to be little scope for agency and little secure sense of self. It is difficult to tolerate and is often employed as a technique of social control.

This humiliation is an experience of horror. Talal Asad offers a vivid definition of such horror, taken from Stanley Cavell, which I will suggest also expresses the experience of humiliation:

> Horror is the title I am giving to the perception of the precariousness of human identity, to the perception that it may be lost or invaded, that we may be, or may become, something other than we are, or take ourselves for; that our origins as human beings need accounting for, and are unaccountable.[6]

The themes of this definition will be important throughout this thesis: a sense of a "human identity," originally highly valued and held as a sort of bedrock, that ultimately proves to be less than solid, having been degraded as a consequence or a technique of control.

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[5] Joseph Kip Kosek, *Acts of conscience: Christian nonviolence and modern American democracy* (Columbia University Press, 2009), 8.
[6] Stanley Cavell, *The claim of reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 418-19.

The experience of psychological trauma is also similar and is also often described in terms such as these. Concerning traumatized veterans, Asad describes them as "in the end unable to give a coherent account of themselves as human beings. [Each individual] is at once perpetrator and victim. The inability to recount that experience, to grasp it verbally, is essential to its horror."[7] The moral ambiguity of the combat situation, and the difficulty in fitting the experience into a clear moral category, are both perhaps part of what makes the experience so difficult to live with.

There is also in the manner of Mohamed's death something akin to what we experience in a suicide bombing. Asad describes this as "the violent appearance of something that is normally disregarded in secular modernity: the limitless pursuit of freedom, the illusion of an uncoerced interiority that can withstand the force of institutional disciplines."[8] It is such a freedom that can bring hope to this otherwise bleak situation, and the source of truth and resistance to oppression.

The term "secularity" will figure prominently in this thesis. I am following Asad and Saba Mahmood in their use of the word, which does not refer primarily to the separation of church and state, or to the evacuation of religion from secular political life. For these meanings, I follow them in preferring the more familiar term, "secularism," which at its root implies and is based upon a certain "kind of religion that enlightened intellectuals . . . see as compatible with modernity." From this "secular" point of view, "only religions that have accepted the assumption of liberal discourse are being commended, in which tolerance is sought on the basis of a destructive relation between law and morality."[9] The most common position for modern liberals is that "'the secular' [is] an emancipation from theology as a form of false consciousness, a release that helps to achieve human freedom." This is not the definition of "the secular" I will be employing in this thesis. Rather, I will follow Asad, who in David Scott's words

> is careful to distinguish between "the epistemological category of the secular" (i.e., "what are the practices, concepts, and sensibilities regarded as necessary for knowledge about reality?") and "the political doctrine of secularism" (i.e., "how does the state try to ensure that it is

[7] Talal Asad, *On suicide bombing* (Columbia University Press, 2007), 72.
[8] Ibid., 91.
[9] Talal Asad, *Formations of the secular: Christianity, Islam, modernity* (Stanford University Press, 2003), 183, E-book

> neutral in relation to different religions?"). Neither directly determines the other.[10]

I will primarily be concerned with "the epistemological category of the secular." And I will be following Asad in his willingness to explore surprising analogies and correspondences, even when they embrace essentialist ways of thinking and especially when their falsehood is embraced with so much certainty. I quote him at length:

> I find myself sympathizing with some of the attempts to rethink various kinds of Islamic future in the Middle East. The idea that you can simply catalogue Islamic movements as reactionary, as a revolt against modernity, is, I think, quite unhelpful. My point here is not that these movements are really headed in a progressive direction. It's that we ought to ask whether some of them might not be trying to think about things that have not been thought about before, ways of existing. That is why I'm sympathetic to some of these movements some of the time but also rather pessimistic about the possibility of their being able to construct something really new and interesting. I think that the powers of modern universalism, the powers of modern capitalist hegemony, are such that it's very difficult for certain new things to arise. Ironically, anti-essentialism can become a ruse of hegemonic forces, as I argued in my chapter on Muslims in Europe. So, I think it's much more likely that there's going to be a replay of the way in which the Catholic church has gradually adjusted itself over the years to secular democratic politics. You might find, if this is allowed in places like Turkey, that Islamic movements become liberal democratic parties. These movements aren't going to pose a threat to liberalism. So I think you point to a contradiction in my thinking, born out of, on the one hand, the conviction that modernity has created powerful conditions for change in limited directions and, on the other hand, a sympathy for people aiming at far-reaching alternatives but also a pessimism about the realizability or sanity of these alternatives.[11]

The unusual focus of this thesis comes out of this need to explore new ways of existing, hopefully sane ways, in the face of the overwhelming powers of modern liberalism. This approach has required in this thesis the tactical embrace of essentialist rhetoric against hegemonic forces, and the questioning of *prima facie* goods such as Islam adjusting to secular democratic politics as the Catholic Church once did.

A key text for understanding Asad's concept of secularity is Marx's "On 'The Jewish Question.'" In that essay, Marx describes a precondition for "human

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[10] David Scott, in Scott and Hirschkind, 228, E-book.
[11] Asad, in *Powers of the Secular Modern*, 349, E-book.

emancipation," or that freedom in which communal human life together (via a network of connections) will no longer occur just in the "political state" but will also occur in "civil society." As it is now, only in our public lives are we able to "reason together" (and thereby "exercise freedom"), while our private lives are consumed with utilitarian concerns.[12]

This emancipations will be accomplished only when people "no longer [separate] power" from themselves "in the shape of political power." Earlier in the essay Marx explains the nature of this separation:

> Where the political state has attained its true development, man . . . leads a twofold life, a heavenly and an earthly life: life in the political community, in which he considers himself a communal being, and life in civil society, in which he acts as a private individual, regards other men as a means, degrades himself into a means, and becomes the plaything of alien powers.[13]

Religion in this context, in which "civil society" is isolated and subsumed into "political state," "is no longer the essence of community, but . . . the expression of man's separation from his community . . . . It is only the abstract avowal of specific perversity, private whimsy, and arbitrariness."[14] The state is pre-eminent because it makes all religions equal—and so the authority of the state, or the authority of reason, is greater.

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this thesis is to articulate an Islamic nonviolence not by means of the expected route, through the most pacific aspects of Islam, but through that aspect secular liberals in the West most fears: that of so-called "political Islam." I will be attempting an immanent critique that first employs the "anthropological skepticism" of Talal Asad and Saba Mahmood to clear away from principled nonviolence some of the distortions encouraged by secularity, the child of Orientalism and the ideology of modern liberalism.

This is not simply a historical phenomenon. Oppression today is more widespread than during the peak of Western colonialism. But, I argue, it is less visible as such insofar as it is, in effect, eagerly sought. I argue that the pursuit of

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[12] Karl Marx, "On the Jewish question," *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Vol. 4 (New York: Norton, 1972), E-book.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

individuality and personal freedom, reflected not only in legal and other state structures, but also, for example, in cultural and philosophical forms, is precisely what cements the oppression of modernity in our lives: we have chosen it. Freedom is the highest value of the West, and that which the West most eagerly prescribes to others. But this freedom, in which the self is ever more powerful and sovereign, alienates even the winners from one another, and inflicts catastrophic material damage on the rest.

And while "modernity" becomes more absolutist in its claims, it has few serious ideological opponents. Mohandas Gandhi was one such early such opponent. Sayyid Qutb, the philosophical godfather of political Islam, was another. For this reason alone they should be considered together. But it is important not to go too far in attacking modernity. My own position here matches Asad's, who counsels moderation:

> my concern here is not to blame the West but to substitute the idea of a historical space in which violence circulates, in which our wider aims are too often undermined by our own actions, for the simple agentive model that many commentators employ, in which rational democrats in the West react defensively to destructive terrorists from the East.[15]

In beginning to interrogate modernity and secularity, I will follow one of Asad's favored routes and examine *pain*. From within the ideology of secularity, pain is just one thing, like water, and able to be quantified. In the West it is an unmitigated evil. However, as Asad asserts, that painful experiences

> are not simply mediated culturally and physically, they are themselves modes of living a relationship. The ability to live such relationships over time transforms pain from a passive experience into an active one, and thus defines one of the ways of living sanely in the world.[16]

In other words, from the point of view of secular liberalism, it might seem as though pain is absolutely bad thing, something to be resisted as best as one can. But from other points of view, from other traditions, in which pain can be a more "active" experience, a window is opened up onto saner ways of living in general. I will argue in this thesis that principled nonviolence, the nonviolence of Gandhi and King, is a just such a tradition, through which pain lived a certain way can help refashion webs of relationships—sanity in the face of the solipsism of modern life. This way of living

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[15] Asad, *Suicide Bombing*, 25.
[16] Asad, *Formations, 86, E-book.*

pain might remain invisible to us if we can only interpret protestors being beaten (for instance) as "passive," and thereby also humiliating.

I am working from a definition of nonviolence as a refusal to submit to, flee from, or inflict violence in the face of the violence of the other, I follow the distinction first made by Gandhi, between the mode of strategic nonviolence, marked by concern with power, and a desire to deprive the opponent of legitimacy and support, and principled nonviolence, marked by love of the opponent. In strategic nonviolence, the nonviolence is simply a tool, to be discarded should another, better tool present itself. It is by far the more common mode of nonviolence at the level of mass actions, manifesting as strikes, sit-ins, boycotts, etc. It is often held to be effective at bringing about political change with comparatively little violence.

Strategic is the most common, and most familiar. It is trying to make things happen, usually to deprive the opponent of resources, support and legitimacy or to force her or him to accept demands. It is a technique that can be let go of whenever a better technique comes along, and it can be combined with violence as is tactically prudent. By allowing strategic violence to occur, a state can thereby demonstrate both its tolerance and robustness.

In contrast, principled nonviolence is observed regardless of immediate results, seeks the "conversion" of the opponent without winners and losers, and is based on enduring suffering willingly, without retaliation. Thomas Merton expressed it well when he wrote about Gandhi that he ultimately "wished to liberate the oppressors themselves from their blind and hopeless dependence on the system which kept things as they were, and which consequently enslaved everybody both spiritually and materially."[17]

A good, short illustration of principled nonviolence is offered by Gene Sharp, a key theorist/activist of nonviolence: the Quaker "War of the Lamb" in Puritan Massachusetts:

> As the Quakers came to the colony, they were persecuted as heretics, at first with the approval of the populace. They were at first imprisoned and then banished on pain of death. After many returned despite these punishments, there were some executions. Eventually the popular mood softened, the populace began giving support in various

[17] Thomas Merton, "Gandhi and the one-eyed giant," *Gandhi on nonviolence* (New York: New Directions, 1965), 16.

forms, until finally the laws were repealed and Quakers were allowed to meet openly.[18]

What I am claiming for nonviolence is ultimately not so radical: that it is about beginning to restore social relationships through a sort of "ritualized" forgiveness, a process in which humility and committed "religious" practice is helpful (as secular liberals might put it). Or, to use the clear formulation of Iris Murdoch: "the cycle of revenge is quenched when suffering is endured only and not passed on."[19]

As well as challenging political oppression, I argue that this principled nonviolence can also challenge the separateness and individuality (but loneliness) that secular liberals value so much. Not as a meaning, but as a practice (at the level of habitus/virtue ethics), it opens a dialogue even with a partner that has no interest in dialogue, who perhaps even views the protestor with contempt and/or fear. It expresses the possibility of a new relationship to suffering and pain, and of a freedom no longer subject to threats in the same way.

I argue that this practice can lay the foundation for a radical sort of democracy: where suffering is made more visible, the often denied or invisible suffering of oppression is less likely to happen. In this sort of democracy, based (proportionally?) on courage, there is not just the assigning of decision-making weight to the capacity to suffer; more importantly, the principled nonviolence fosters conditions for a new way of living together. This contrasts sharply with the current way liberals make decisions under the regime of secularity: apparently based on an ideology of reason, but in reality based on the ability to inflict suffering and humiliation on the opponent (as opposed to enduring it).

The most difficult part of principled nonviolence is the personal transformation required, in which one must "reduce oneself to zero" (to use Gandhi's phrase), laying down the compulsive pursuit of "self-sovereignty": power, "active" agency, dominance.

The claim I am making in the second part of the thesis is more radical. Towards an antidote to this "sovereignty of the self" I attempt to construct a bridge from principled nonviolence to the political Islam of Sayyid Qutb and the

[18] Sharp, 719; Sharp draws on Harvey Seifert, *The Use by American Quakers of Nonviolent Resistance as a Method of Social Change* (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1940), 22-54.
[19] Timothy Gorringe, *God's Just Vengeance* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 247.

"sovereignty of God" that is his central concern. I will suggest that the political Islam articulated by Sayyid Qutb is a surprisingly good fit with principled nonviolence, and that nonviolent *jihadis* would find the gates of the West thrown open to them. There is not even a need for secrecy. Many groups in the West seek converts.

As I hope will become clear, the Qutb's political Islam possesses the degree of "religious commitment" (as secular liberals might put it) to serve as "fuel" for the technique of principled nonviolence. I think Pope Benedict XVI was alluding to something related when he spoke of the superiority of Islamic culture to the culture of the West in terms of its ability to "provide a spiritual basis for life." The Pope suggested that Islam

> is capable of offering a valid spiritual basis for the life of the peoples, a basis that seems to have slipped out of the hands of old Europe, which thus, notwithstanding its continued political and economic power, is increasingly viewed as a declining culture condemned to fade away.[20]

And, finally, I will argue that principled nonviolence is a sort of trap for secular liberalism, such as was part of some medieval theories of Christ's atonement, but a trap in which there is no dishonesty: because of the systematic blindness imposed by the regime of secularity, in which secular liberalism cannot accept that nonviolence has any of the sorts of effects I am claiming for it, or that "religious devotion" can be a source of political change. Secular liberalism is much more concerned with avoiding the suffering and pain that violence produces. From its point of view, with full information about the "transaction" I am proposing, the deal is a very good one.

METHOD

In terms of method, I will attempt to follow Asad's observance of the Wittgenstinian dictum as much as possible, to always look for "use" instead of "meaning." In this spirit I will attempt to avoid the language of "internal states" as much as possible, even though nonviolence is usually discussed with reference to such states. Similarly, I will endeavor to avoid the abstraction of "meanings" and their manipulation by e.g. the tools of literary criticism. I will hope instead that structurally similar traditions in different contexts can illuminate each other simply by being

[20] Quoted in Russell Shorto, "The Anti-Secularist: Can Pope Benedict XVI Re-Christianize Europe?" *The New York Times Magazine* (April 8, 2007): 58; quoted in Bergesen, "Qutb's Core Ideas," 17.

compared, opening up "new vistas" to use David Scott's term, or "new ways of comparing disparate ways of life." My argument is analogical, hoping to open surprising correspondences and perhaps offer some tactical handholds.

I will attempt to engage with the traditions of principled nonviolence and political Islam per Asad's suggestion that "anthropology is best thought of as the comparative study of concepts across space and time." My hope is that strong analogies between practices across cultures may be generative of new ways of life, and of new modes of human flourishing.

This thesis is primarily intended to be the beginning of an intervention, in a spirit articulated by Asad, who wrote that out of an examination of the "taken-for-granted notions, which mobilize our ways of life," "there can emerge other things that are equally human, so to speak, but entirely new."[21] My hope is that this thesis can encourage some entirely new ways of life, and "different kinds of possibility."[22] Or, put slightly differently, that it can offer "a glimpse of 'another world' that grasps one's life."[23]

Attempts to "do anthropology" inevitably come up against questions of the complicity of the discipline with oppressive practices. Asad famously pointed out that while of course the field had historically enabled oppressive practices, such as colonialism, of more concern is how it fosters oppression in the present:

> The modesty of anthropologists regarding the ideological role of their discourses in the determination of colonial structures does not seem to be matched by a corresponding skepticism regarding the role of ideology generally in the determination of social structures which are objects of their discourse.[24]

Concerning this, Asad states that "My point is only that the process of cultural translation is enmeshed in conditions of power—professional, national, international. And among these conditions is the authority of ethnographers to uncover the implicit meanings of subordinate societies."[25] My own position—as an educated, white American non-Muslim male, writing about colonialism, Islam and the Middle East—

[21] David Scott, "Appendix: The trouble of thinking: An interview with Talal Asad," *Powers of the secular modern: Talal Asad and his interlocutors* (Stanford University Press, 2006), 326.
[22] Asad in Scott and Hirschkind, 274.
[23] Ibid., 223.
[24] Talal Asad, "Anthropology and the Analysis of Ideology." *Man* (1979): 607.
[25] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of religion: Discipline and reasons of power in Christianity and Islam* (JHU Press, 2009), 223, E-book.

certainly needs explanation. I can only plead that I am offering suggestions for those more qualified to follow up on, should they appear promising. I have attempted to adopt a stance of nonviolence even in this thesis, open and non-reactive even to positions that alarm me, with faith that this stance of nonviolence is what allows truth to manifest.

Thus while a sense of urgency motivates this thesis, at the same time I hesitate. There is always a danger that my writing remains solely an expression of my privilege. A white man is on treacherous ground seeming to be recommending suffering to men and women of color, for any reason. Ultimately it is not for me or anyone to tell another how to resist their oppression.

The hazard seems exacerbated here in that I am trafficking in tropes traditionally used in the service of Orientalism. Yet I adopt them consciously because I hope to craft a marriage that may receive deep support in both the West and the lands of Islam. While there is a risk of offense to Islam, I aim to make the strongest case possible—to say in effect to the West: even if your worst fears about Islam are true, this thesis still holds. And to Islam: your worst fears are indeed often realized, but this thesis still holds.

Asad himself seems rather pessimistic about the possibility of helpful social change. He worries that any such social change would rather relocate social suffering, simply exchanging winners and losers. But this thesis is seeking to offer a method, rather than a final social arrangement of winners and losers. It is seeking to offer a method that can be used equally on enemies and friends; a nonviolence that one could offer even against a beloved child; a method that blesses—as Gandhi put it—both the one using it and the one on whom it is used.[26]

IMMANENT CRITIQUE

For this thesis I am attempting to engage in a sort of immanent critique, defined as "a political project aimed at evaluating and typically challenging social norms, practices, and self-understandings and recommending their reform or replacement."[27] Immanent critique was certainly an aspiration of both Gandhi and

[26] Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, 94.
[27] Dan Sabia, "Defending immanent critique." *Political Theory* 38, no. 5 (2010): 691-92.

Qutb. Immanent Critique theorist Dan Sabia makes three important points about immanent critique, defending it from some of the most common charges against it:

> First, immanent critique is wary of conventional understandings of social practices and norms and of the arguments made to justify social practices in terms of social norms, and of either or both in terms of authoritative grounds. Second, immanent critique interrogates and challenges conventional understandings of the authoritative texts that ultimately ground practices and norms by developing allegedly superior interpretations of their identity or authenticity, meaning, coherence, and import. In this way, the criteria—the historical narratives, traditional values, scriptural injunctions and ideals, or ideological norms and principles—ordinarily deployed to ground or justify ways of living and being are thrown into question. Hence, third, the effect of immanent critique is to destabilize conventional beliefs and assumptions, whereas the effect of conventionalism is to endorse them.[28]

I am staging a conversation, a possible meeting of the minds. Since I am attempting immanent critique on two ideologies—the political Islam of Sayyid Qutb and the political nonviolence of Mohandas Gandhi—I emphasize norms and practices that hopefully resonate with partisans of both ideologies. That said, "plausible but conflicting" interpretations are still possible, as with the so-called "problem of underdetermination."[29]

As an extended example of immanent critique, Sabia offers a summary of a review by Heiner Bielefeldt, on, among other things, the reconciliation of "modern conceptions of human rights with respect for Islam." From this perspective, the ideals of gender equality and religious liberty are especially difficult to reconcile with *shari'a*. The model for this sort of rapprochement is how Christianity gradually accommodated to modernity, eventually becoming private, one among equals and so subordinate to the state. Bielefeldt divides the ways that bridges might be build into several categories. There are many similarities with how bridges might be build between liberal Islam and principled nonviolence.

For instance, human rights or nonviolence might be "Islamized," though any such approach is usually rejected from the liberal perspective. Other more "pragmatic" approaches attempt to "accommodate both to worldly demands and human imperfections," which in Bielefeldt's opinion "opens spaces for "taking steps toward a gradual reconciliation with modern ideas of freedom and equality." This does not even include "liberal reconceptualization of the *shari'a*" demanding

[28] Ibid., 691
[29] Ibid., 688.

"courageous and frank criticism" of the *shar'ia*, meant to "lead to a thoroughly revised understanding of the main sources of the *shari'a*, namely, Qur'an and Sunna" so that an "understanding of the "essential" or "deeper meaning" of both texts can in turn liberate the *shari'a* "from the bulk of medieval legal casuistry" that has rendered it "outdated, normatively dubious, and practically problematic." The goal is to "[open up] the conceptual space for historic criticism as well as political reforms in accordance with democratic principles and modern standards of human rights."[30] In these conceptual encounters between Islam and the West, there always seems to be an element of conversion, and element of coercion, frequently resulting in what Saba Mahmood describes as "the remaking of certain kinds of religious subjectivities . . . so as to render them compliant with liberal political rule."[31]

Nonviolence is often seen as a sister to the ideology of human rights, a means corresponding to an end. Both are no doubt children of the liberal tradition. And so for any rapprochement with political Islam, it will need to be shown how the history between Islam and the West, as it is often put, can be accounted for. The traces will need to be made clear. Neither nonviolence nor human rights can build a bridge to Islam insofar as they are still contaminated by Orientalism. And, as Asad emphasizes, human rights has dark historical roots, associations with both with slavery and absolutism.[32] Nonviolence has a dark side as well, unfailingly subjecting the junior partner to "reason" and "criticism" (especially of the 'irrational' *shari'a*), as well as an implied critique of violence. We thus need to take seriously claims that nonviolence is a strategy of power, that seeks to maintain its power.

It appears often to be in the best interests of power to allow some nonviolence, strategic or otherwise. It is clear how nonviolence often has effects at the level of power. But by its existence it also legitimates the claim that the regime operates reasonably and nonviolently. Nonviolence thus can be seen (and often sees itself) as a defender of and expression of liberal values. From a liberal perspective it can seem as though nonviolence is simply a slightly more vigorous "petition" for rights—basically like mainstream organizing, just involving some mostly harmless violations of the

[30] Ibid., 698-701.
[31] Saba Mahmood, "Secularism, hermeneutics, and empire: The politics of Islamic reformation." *Public culture* 18, no. 2 (2006): 328.
[32] Asad, *Formations*, 135, E-book.

law. I admit that this is true of strategic nonviolence. But not true principled nonviolence.

In the liberal West, as Mamdani points out, even the pages of the *New York Times* now include regular accounts distinguishing "good Muslims" from "bad Muslims" (a hint: good Muslims are "modern, secular, and Westernized"; bad Muslims are "doctrinal, antimodern, and virulent").[33] From the point of view of the liberal West, foremost among the tasks of a liberal Islam in attempting rapprochement between nonviolence and Islam, is evacuating Islam of violence. The liberal West thus tries to build bridges with the most liberal tendencies in Islam, trying to add Islam to "the family of religions." In the liberal West, nonviolence can serve to feed the narrative of redemption and heroes, such as Asad discusses in connection to the American Civil Right Movement. Nonviolence is viewed through secularity only ever as a either a variety of "strategic nonviolence" (e.g. a ploy for the moral high ground or other advantage of power) or an expression of irrational religious devotion.

It would seem that liberal Islam would provide the best opportunity for a marriage with nonviolence. There certainly is a nonviolence that corresponds to this liberal Islam, more in line with the secular order: what I am referring to as strategic nonviolence. This is the more "secular" version of nonviolence, to go with the more "secular" view of human rights and Islam.

Certainly, what I am referring to as "the liberal approach" can be quite compelling. For instance, many *suras* of the Holy Quran show strong support for nonviolence. For example:

- "Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and there-upon, the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he were a devoted friend." (Q 41:34)
- "Repel evil (not with evil) but with something that is better—that is, with forgiveness and amnesty."(Q 23:96)
- [Adam's first son said,] "If you stretch your hand against me to slay me, it is not for me to stretch my hand against you to slay you: for I do fear God, the Cherisher of the Worlds." (Q 5:28)
- "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (Q 2:256).

[33] Mamdani, *Good Muslims*, 38, E-book.

- "God commands you to treat (everyone) justly, generously and with kindness"(Q 16:90)

But playing this sort of game requires explaining away the many other *suras* that allow or enjoin violence, and the sometimes violent example of the Prophet himself. What is to be done with the execution of the 600 members of the Qurayza tribe (justified as God's vengeance)? Or the more violent activity in general revealed at Medina, versus the "eternal message of Islam" (from a liberal perspective), revealed at Mecca.

Perhaps a more modest goal for this sort of scriptural cherry-picking might be to view violence and nonviolence simply as alternative tactics or tools. Just as *jihadis* no longer respond to the injunction to "bring out [their] steeds" with physical horses, or fight *jahilliyah* with swords and bows, instead choosing weapons that are more effective; so now, perhaps principled nonviolence could just be conceived of as a new weapon that is more effective in achieving the *jihadis'* goals.

ORIENTALISM

Edward Said summed up "the principal dogmas of Orientalism" in his magisterial study of the same name. The first dogma is that the same Orientalist histories that portray "the West" as "rational, developed, humane [and] superior," caricature "the Orient" as "aberrant, undeveloped [and] inferior." Another key dogma is that "the Orient" functions according to set rules inscribed in sacred texts, not in response to the changing requirements of life. The third dogma prescribes "that the Orient is eternal, uniform, and incapable of defining itself; therefore it is assumed that a highly generalized and systematic vocabulary for describing the Orient from a Western standpoint is inevitable and scientifically 'objective.'" And the final dogma is "that the Orient is at the bottom something either to be feared (the Yellow Peril, the Mongol hordes, the brown dominions) or to be controlled (by pacification, research and development, outright occupation whenever possible)."[34]

Said utilizes many images to convey the meaning of the term Orientalism. At its most basic level, Orientalism expresses a relation and ideology in which there are two parties. One party—the Occident—is dominating, while the other—the Orient—is dominated. This paternalistic, essentialized relation is maintained with as little

[34] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), E-book.

force as possible; it is maintained by soft power. Building on a comment by the Egyptian administrator Cromer, Said develops the image of Orientalism as a massive all-embracing machine that consumes "human material," "material wealth," knowledge, and indeed everything it can, processing it all into further power/knowledge, which increases the power and efficiency of the machine itself. A strength of this image is its suggestion that Orientalism is more than just a network of ideas which could easily be dispelled by better information. It rather incorporates a material element, and it also nearly suggests a sort of agency, a *telos* to this structure: namely the smooth maintenance of the oppressor/oppressed relationships. It is a total system. The colonial encounter was the arena in which the tools of the ideology of secularity were honed.[35]

Orientalism undeniably legitimizes colonialism, but it also preceded colonialism. While it seems as though the reality of the Orient would have some relevance to the content of this discourse, it does not: it is overwhelmingly about the reality of the Occident, and the myth it manufactures about itself in order to maintain itself, even while the people in the Orient themselves often accept and maintain the discourse.

Quoting Gramsci, Said refers to Orientalism as a "detached logic, governed by a battery of desires, repressions, investments and projections."[36] This places the discussion principally within the realm of psychology. In classical theory, repressions and projections are both defense mechanisms, attempts at anxiety reduction. Such anxiety might stem from the dissonance between one's self-image—e.g., the thought: "I am a good Christian who is committed to justice"—versus the reality of one's actions as a colonialist—e.g. personal actions that exploit and cause suffering to a native population. Alternatively, anxiety might arise from fear of a possible army invasion, or be more simply rooted in the fear of another with unfamiliar customs and beliefs. In all cases, the projective strategy of scapegoating—the creation of an us-them dynamic—serves to reduce anxiety by solidifying one's shaky identity as an individual, or the shaky identity of one's group.[37]

Said quotes Gramsci appreciatively on the need to begin at one's own location, prejudices, and "traces": "The starting-point of critical elaboration is the

[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

consciousness of what one really is, and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical processes to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory . . . Therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory."[38] It seems that the proper response to such a realization is not shame, denial, or repression, but open acknowledgement of these tendencies and a commitment to work on them: the inventory of our traces. But these traces are not all of who we are.

HUMANITY

"Humanity" would seem to be a central figure for my project. It is certainly key to the discourse of human rights, usually seen as a close relative of nonviolence. As nonviolence is commonly understood, that is certainly true. However, in my unusual perspective on nonviolence, "humanity" is part of the constellation of secular liberalism, "active" agency and armored subjectivity. So it will only be useful to me as a figure of traffic as a way to explore what principled nonviolence works *against*.

While Asad affirms the importance of the category of humanity, and its "sacredness" and seeming universality, he rejects the familiar account of its history, that

> three unique characteristics of the modern West ("modern science and technology, the idea of a common humanity, and the capacity for self-criticism and dissent") began to take distinctive shape in the Renaissance. It was then, apparently, that Renaissance humanism ushered in the beginning of a secular vision of universal order in which man was the sole agent and humanity the central idea.[39]

The account he settles on is much more complicated. A truer story of humanism is rather

> about how medieval literature was viewed from the perspective of the European nineteenth century, how the medieval concept of natural law as divinely inscribed morality was translated into a secular device for relating the plurality of the world's customs to the universality of transcendent law—the accidental to the essential. It is also about how the humanist commitment to skepticism and self-preservation [which] facilitated not only the emergence of the idea of the modern autonomous individual but also of the modern sovereign state confronting and subjugating others within and without.[40]

[38] Ibid.
[39] Asad, "*Reflections,*" 394.
[40] Ibid., 396.

The current of humanism upon which I will focus my critique is that of Immanuel Kant, which has a foundational role in the discourse of modern, secular liberalism. Kant created the foundation for an ethics and a legal structure based on an image of the human as able to reason ethically according to "transcendent rules," in which duty and right are paramount. This is the ethical subject created by and creating the liberal, secular order.

This ethical subject is also constituted by violence, according to Asad, divided by a distinction I will return to shortly, that between modern and not modern:

> Moderns believe that unlike barbarians and savages, civilized fighters act within a legal-moral framework; the law of war is crucial for restraining killing, in manner and in number. Savages, unlike moderns, are strictly speaking not persons on whom legal or moral responsibility can be affixed. Unlike civilized persons, they have no conscience, no regard for the sacredness of life. It is said that moderns find cruel killing to be barbaric and shocking because it appears to challenge the very basis of sound moral responsibility; it foregrounds character (it is in the nature of barbarians to be cruel) in place of capacity (the subject either has or does not have the authority to use violence). It is essentially the character of the barbarian (or, for that matter, of the terrorist) and not his deed that is regarded with horror.[41]

PAIN / HUMILIATION AS AN ETHICAL GROUND

In the modern, secular world, humiliation and pain in general are usually viewed as unmitigated negatives, private and "thought-destroying." Pain as seen in the secular liberal worldview is opposed to everything good: agency, power, autonomy and security. From this perspective, pain cannot reasonably appear as a ground for political action (except as a spur to eliminate it), and its willing endurance may be seen as only leading to additional humiliation (as Malcolm X famously asserted about nonviolence). From this perspective, pain will never "ennoble" the sufferer.

As I am conceptualizing it, following Gandhi, there can be a agent who through practices of self-formation has developed a more "passive" agency and is no longer able to be humiliated, by suffering or otherwise. Which is not to say that "agency" is any more an essence than any of these other terms. Within the secular framework, as Asad puts it, "the notion is reinforced that agency means the self-ownership of the individual to whom external power always signifies a potential

[41] Ibid., 413.

threat." This is not how I will be using the concept. Rather, I acknowledge that there are various uses of "agency" that cannot be brought together into a unified concept. Thus calling agency "active" or "passive" is more a way to referring to a mode or an inflection that can characterize all of these different uses.

Within the secular framework, one is either an "agent" or a "victim." In contrast, using the formulation of "passive agency," borrowed from Saba Mahmood, I wish to suggest a different mode for enacting all of the different ways we talk about agency, and even to agree with Asad that suffering can itself be a kind of agency. Pain can be "an active, practical relationship inhabiting time." As Asad emphasizes,

> My point is that one can live one's pain sanely or insanely, and (although ideas about insanity change) that the progressivist model of agency diverts attention away from our trying to understand how this is done in different traditions, because of the assumption that the agent always seeks to overcome pain conceived as object and as state of passivity. The secular emphasis on the integral human body as the locus of moral sovereignty makes it difficult to grasp the idea of pain as an imagined relationship in which such "internal" states as memory and hope mediate sociality.[42]

Thus, nonviolence of any sort does not make pain public, because it was never otherwise (as Wittgenstein emphasizes). And if the opponents of nonviolence feel humiliated by "losing the moral high ground," it is no worse than any other criminal who feels humiliated when his or her crimes are exposed. It is not incompatible with love.

GANDHI

One key text for my bridge-building project is Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* ("*Indian Freedom*"), written on board a ship returning Gandhi to South Africa from a lobbying mission in London, during the early part of his career. As Brown puts it, this was as close as Gandhi came to writing a "fundamental work."[43] In this work, he addresses moderates, radicals, and expat countrymen such as he no doubt met in London, who sought to replicate the modernity they experienced there in their home country.

Gandhi does not reject all of modern civilization. He certainly welcomes "civil liberty, equality, rights, prospects for improving the economic conditions of life,

[42] Ibid., 86.
[43] Judith Margaret Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of hope* (Yale University Press, 1991), 65.

liberation of women from tradition, and religious toleration," for instance. But, at the same time, as Anthony Parel writes,

> the welcome is conditional in that liberty has to harmonize with *swaraj*, rights with duties, empirical knowledge with moral insight, economic development with spiritual progress, religious toleration with religious belief, and women's liberation with the demands of a broader conception of humanity.[44]

In Gandhi's conceptualization, modern society is directed primarily toward economic growth, and religion is valued only for its moral and psychological benefits. Gandhi saw modernity as the root of colonialism, and the most dangerous enemy of India. In Gandhi's conception, if modernity were not defeated, no real *swaraj* would be possible.

The influences on *Hind Swaraj* are multiple and complex. A list just of Western influences would include, in Anthony Parel's view, "jurisprudence, vegetarianism, theosophy, Christian theology, art criticism, criticism of the new industrial civilization, and civil disobedience in its Socratic and New England forms."

A key influence that must be mentioned is Leo Tolstoy. Two of his ideas are particularly clear in *Hind Swaraj* and Gandhi's later work. The first is Tolstoy's understanding of what the New Testament teaches about violence, or "how to settle the conflict between people who now consider a thing evil that others consider good, and vice versa—and a workable solution for it":

> Either one must find "an absolute and indubitable criterion of evil," or one must not "resist evil by violence." The first solution had been tried but was found wanting; the second solution, taught by Christ, is the only viable one.[45]

The second key idea is from Tolstoy's *Letter to a Hindoo*. In that letter, Tolstoy wrote,

> it is not the English who have enslaved the Indians, but the Indians who have enslaved themselves." If the English have enslaved Indians it is because the latter "recognized, and still recognize, force as the fundamental principle of social order." In accord with this principle "they submitted to their little rajahs," and on their behalf struggled against one another, fought the Europeans and the English. For the

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[44] Anthony J. Parel, "Gandhi: 'Hind Swaraj' and Other Writings" (2014), xvii-xviii.

[45] Aylmer Maude, *The Works of Leo Tolstoy: On life and essays on religion,* Vol. 12 (For the Tolstoy Society, Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1934), 58.

> Indians to complain about the English is like the alcoholic complaining about the wine merchants. If Indians renounce the law of violence, Tolstoy concludes, "not only will hundreds not enslave millions, but even millions will be unable to enslave one individual.[46]

And finally, *Hind Swaraj* is also a book about "inner" transformation and how that can have political implications; for instance, how what I am calling a cultivation of "passive" agency can manifest as tremendous political courage. About the centrality of courage, Gandhi wrote,

> If the choice is set between cowardice and violence I would advise violence. I praise and extol the serene courage of dying without killing. Yet I desire that those who have not this courage should rather cultivate the art of killing and being killed, than basely to avoid the danger. This is because he who runs away commits mental violence; he has not the courage of facing death by killing. I would a thousand times prefer violence than the emasculation of a whole race. I prefer to use arms in defense of honor than remain the vile witness of dishonor.[47]

Violence is thus not the greatest evil for Gandhi; modernity is. As Gandhi ponders the condition of India under modernity in *Hind Swaraj*, he seems to break down:

> In thinking of it, my eyes water and my throat gets parched. I have grave doubts whether I shall be able sufficiently to explain what is in my heart. It is my deliberate opinion that India is being ground down not under the English heel but under that of modern civilization. It is groaning under the monster's terrible weight. There is yet time to escape it, but every day makes it more and more difficult. Religion is dear to me, and my first complaint is that India is becoming irreligious. Here I am not thinking of the Hindu, the Mahomedan, or the Zoroastrian religion, but of that religion which underlies all religions. We are turning away from God.[48]

From a secular perspective, it is easy to view such a statement as hyperbole. But Gandhi seems to be earnestly suggesting that "modern civilisation" is in fact more destructive to India than the presence of the British, and that the fundamental problem for India is the loss of "that religion which underlies all religions."

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[46] L. A. Tolstoy, "Letter to a Hindoo, 1908." Available on the web from: http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu

[47] Gandhi, *CW* 22, 115.

[48] Gandhi, and Anthony J. Parel, *Hind Swaraj and other writings* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 42, E-book.

Elsewhere, Gandhi emphasizes how modern civilization lacks "a *telos*." Rather, modern civilization is merely "centrifugal," concerned merely with "bodily welfare" and "(taking) note neither of morality nor of religion."[49] Under such civilization, Gandhi claims, we in effect validate and accept our enslavement, with which we are complicit, having been seduced through our greed and other vices. He points out that "according to the teaching of Mahomed this would be considered a Satanic civilisation,"[50] a diagnosis with which Sayyid Qutb would certainly have agreed. In contrast, for Gandhi, "true civilisation" is "that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty": "Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions. So doing, we know ourselves."[51]

In situations of oppression there is often an element of collusion, at the beginning and for the long term. We almost always ultimately cooperate with our oppressors. On this, Asad quotes Hobbes' view that:

> if the sword compels the person who's subordinated to give in to the will of the dominator, then that is almost the same as consent; it's a kind of consent in the sense that it's always possible to say no and choose death.[52]

Here is how Gandhi termed the collusion of the Indians with the British: "The English have not taken India; we have given it to them. They are not in India because of their strength, but because we keep them."[53] And, of course, no one does the "seduction" part of oppression better than America:

> America does not seek our submission by force, but by incantation. It has no need to issue orders, for we have given our consent. There is no need for threats, as it wins because of our thirst for pleasure.[54]

Ultimately, the oppressed and oppressor are never so neatly divided. And if the fault lines "between good and evil" cut through every human group and even every human heart, as Solzhenitsyn puts it,[55] how crucial it is to employ that same

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[49] Ibid., xxii.
[50] Ibid., 37.
[51] Ibid., 67.
[52] Asad in Scott and Hirschkind, 249-250.
[53] Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, 74.
[54] Ignacio Ramonet, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, in Asad, *Formations*, 157, E-book.
[55] Aleksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago: 1918-1956*, trans. Thomas Whitney and Harry Willetts (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), 312.

technique of resistance that we would offer against our loved ones, and would wish our opponents to use against us.

FANON

Psychiatrist Frantz Fanon developed his ideas about violence primarily in the context of the struggle for Algerian independence. In his view, the violence of the "native" was simply a natural extension of the violence the "settler" indulged in first. Only through cleansing violence could the settler write a new "History of Man" that was not the history of European Man. (Both Fanon and Gandhi tended to associate power and full subjectivity with masculinity.)

Fanon is most famous for a single sentence: "The colonized man liberates himself in and through violence."[56] As Mamdani observes, the violence was not just an unfortunate side-effect of colonialism, but was central to its functioning.[57] For Fanon, the final proof of the native's humanity consisted not in being willing to kill settlers but in the courage of risking his own life to do so. Through this courage, Fanon (and Gandhi) thought, humiliation was overcome. Fanon wrote of the native seeking the "liquidation of all untruths implanted in his being by oppression," freeing him "from his inferiority complex . . . his despair and inaction" . . . [making] him fearless and [restoring] his self-respect."[58]

Other groups of natives might alternatively form a "native bourgeoisie" that actively benefit from the presence of the colonizer, and still others might form a class of urban intellectuals that seek to expel the settler but at the same time are fundamentally out of touch with the needs of the masses of their native brothers and sisters.

Like Gandhi, for Fanon there was a psychological correlation between humiliation and oppression. The difference was, for Fanon, the natives who had nothing had only violence available to them.[59]

Reflections of the philosophical basis of Fanon's position can be discerned in anti-fascist currents of thought, such as in the support shown for revolutionary violence in Walter Benjamin and Georges Sorel. Fanon's view on nonviolence was

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[56] Mamdani, *Good Muslim*, 22-23, E-book.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Frantz Fanon, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Constance Farrington. *The wretched of the earth*, Vol. 36 (New York: Grove Press, 1963), E-book.
[59] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 61.

that it was a strategy of "bourgeois colonized elites, and is equivalent to political compromise with the colonial power."

KHAN

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Pashtun "Frontier Gandhi," who raised a nonviolent Muslim army of 100,000 against the British Raj, serves as a good example of how principled nonviolence and political Islam might come together in practice. Without his historical example, the possibility of a bridge between principled nonviolence and political Islam might seem quite fanciful.

The Pashtuns have been portrayed overwhelmingly in anthropological and other writings as "as a fierce and volatile people living by a strict code of honour and feud in a wild and hazardous environment, who have risen up numerous times in violent *jihad*."[60] In other words, the North West Frontier seemed a rather unlikely place for nonviolence to develop.

Honor and revenge were key aspects of the Pathan's life, but not necessarily violence. As Lindholm observed, "Great value is placed on courage, which is not in the act of killing so much as the willingness to take ruinous consequences for the sake of cleansing one's honor."[61] Civil disobedience provided constant opportunity for this sort of courage.[62] Indeed, in a struggle against the overwhelmingly superior military forces of the British, there were many opportunities for confronting the British without weapons, daring them to attack.[63] There were attacks by the British every bit as ferocious as Dharasana, even if not so well-known.

For Badshah Khan, nonviolence was the basis of true *jihad*, while violence is to be rejected as cowardly, ineffective and showing an absence of faith. With very general reliance on Islam, Khan performed a sort of immanent critique to bridge Islam and nonviolence. The following features frequently in his speeches:

> The Holy Prophet Mohammed came into this world and taught us 'That man is a Muslim who never hurts anyone by word or deed, but who works for the benefit and happiness of God's creatures.' Belief in God

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[60] Mukulika Banerjee, *The Pathan unarmed: opposition and memory in the North West Frontier* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 32.
[61] Charles Lindholm, *Frontier perspectives: essays in comparative anthropology* (Oxford University Press, 1996, 52.
[62] Banerjee, *The Pathan*, 157.
[63] Ibid.

is to love one's fellow men.[64]

Khan's nonviolence was a "practice which built upon the [Islamic] virtues of patience and self-restraint," and the Pashtun virtue of courage.[65] At the same time, like Gandhi, Badshah Khan was aware that his followers would have to purge themselves of "anger, pride and impatience" in order to undertake civil disobedience successfully.[66] As shari'atri put it, "They undertook the external 'lesser *jihad*' against the injustices of the colonial rulers, but they had first to undergo their internal 'greater *jihad*' to develop the necessary qualities of service, self-restraint and patience."[67]

Closely linked to these virtues was the notion of *shahadat*, or martyrdom. In discussing this story and the tradition it inspired, Ali shari'ati notes that a *shahid* "bears witness to the injustices of the status quo," and that the essence of martyrdom "is bearing witness to what is taking place in this silent and secret time ... it is the only means of attack and defense . . . that can remain alive at a time and under a regime in which uselessness, falsity and oppression rule."[68] In such a way of thinking, when the balance of power is such that *jihad* is not a reasonable option, the best course of action is for one to pursue martyrdom.[69]

As shari'ati puts it, through his martyrdom, "the dying of a human being guarantees the life of a nation. His *shahadat* is a means whereby faith can remain. It proves that truth is being denied. It reveals the existence of values which are destroyed and forgotten. It is not a death imposed on him."[70] Nonviolence for Khan and his followers thus offered the possibility of martyrdom in its purest form, and was "an act of witness to the enemy's injustice."[71] Khan offered to every Pathan the chance for a glorious martyrdom.

"POLITICAL ISLAM"

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[64] Eknath Easwaran, *Nonviolent soldier of Islam: Badshah Khan, a man to match his mountains* (Blue Mountain Center of Meditation, 1999), E-book.
[65] P.S. Ramu, *Khudai Khidmatgar and National Movement: Momentous Speeches of Badshah Khan* (Delhi: S.S. Publishers, 1992), 114.
[66] Ibid., 145.
[67] Ibid., 148.
[68] A. Shariati "*Jihad* and Shahadat," in Mahmud Taleqani, Jihad *and Shahadat: Struggle and Martyrdom in Islam* (North Haledon, NJ: Islamic Publications International, 1986): 79.
[69] Ramu, 150.
[70] Shariati, 79.
[71] Ramu, 152.

Syed Abul A'la Mawdudi was a key influence on Sayyid Qutb, was among the first to emphasize the importance of *jihad* for contemporary Muslims, was the first to assert that armed struggle was fundamental to *jihad* and was the first to call for a universal *jihad*. Both Qutb and Mawdudi were part of a tradition of thinkers attempting to find Islamic solutions to the negative "social situation." These influences can be seen in Qutb's first significant book, *Social Justice in Islam*. In that work, Qutb wrote

> We have only to look to see that our social situation is as bad as it can be; it is apparent that our social conditions have no possible relation to justice; and so we turn our eyes to Europe, America or Russia, and we expect to import from there solutions to our problems . . . we continually cast aside all our own spiritual heritage, all our intellectual endowment, and all the solutions which might well be revealed by a glance at these things; we cast aside our fundamental principles and doctrines, and we bring in those of democracy, or socialism, or communism.[72]

Qutb went farther than Mawdudi though in rejecting "Westernization" (such as through ideology or "the westernizing philosophical sciences") but embracing the practical/scientific aspects of modernity.

Qutb, along with Fanon and Gandhi, share Western philosophical roots stretching back to the conception of "the human" but also to aspects of Marxist-Leninist tactics. For example, the concept of a "vanguard" figures prominently in Qutb, which he sees as providing a confident example of how to navigate the sinful, modern world. Qutb's ideology, as well as Gandhi's, was formed crucially in the environment of "European political ideologies."

As mentioned earlier, the term "political Islam" represents a (usually racist) attempt to impose a more Christian distinction onto Islam, much as Orientalists try to separate Islam into a "great tradition" of texts/worship and a "lesser tradition" that includes Sufism/mysticism. Nevertheless, I will use the term, albeit cautiously, and only to refer to Qutb's particular conception of how Islam might radically reorder society and the state.

The term "political Islam" has resonances of Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilization," which also views Islam in terms of essences. To reference Mahmood Mamdani's critique of Huntington, the "Clash of Civilizations" thesis fails to

[72] Sayyid Qutb, *Social justice in Islam*. BookBaby, 2015, 5.

conceptualize "culture in terms that are both historical and nonterritorial." As a result, one end up harnessing "cultural resources for very specific national and imperial political projects."[73]

In this thesis I am emphatically not employing the Orientalist trope of "fundamentalism vs. modernity," and have attempted to problematize those terms. What changes when modernity is a potentially negative thing, and fundamentalism, potentially positive?

QUTB

Jahiliyyah is the traditional Islamic term that Qutb adopts to describe the state in which humans act as sovereigns and renounce the sovereignty of God. Qutb describes *jahiliyyah* as "based on rebellion against the authority (*sultan*) of God on earth, which is the most special aspect of divinity, namely: His sovereignty (*hakimiyyah*). It (*jahilliyah*) supports the sovereignty of men, and makes some lords over others."[74] In this view, the sovereignty of any human being (even oneself) is idolatrous—a kind of polytheism.

According to Qutb, God seeks the "freedom of humanity from all forms of servitude (*'ubudiyyah*), to anything other than God."[75] Qutb is convinced that anyone able to reason truly freely will choose an Islamic social system. Since reason is historically and socially constructed, Qutb seems to be saying, he rejects all claims of the possibility of a universally self-evident category of reason. For Qutb, the true role of "reason" is the overturning of the *jahili* order and the implementation of an Islamic social system.[76] This reason is not formalizable like the universal reason of Kant, but is rather "a tradition, a practical and realistic system of life whose true purpose can only be understood through feeling and activity." Moreover, the unwillingness of the Islamic community to erect "theories and a completed constitution for its system" amounts for Qutb to a rejection of human inequality itself—yet another feature of the

[73] Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the roots of terror* (Harmony, 2005), 37, E-book.
[74] Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, No. 512 (International Islamic Publishers, 1981), 8, E-book.
[75] Ibid., 78.
[76] Safdar, Ahmed, *Reform and modernity in Islam: The philosophical, cultural and political discourses among Muslim reformers*. Vol. 26 (IB Tauris, 2013), 164, E-book.

"uncivilized" (*jahili*) community.[77] In contrast, Qutb asserts, in the authentic Muslim community,

> the Qur'an became a part of their personalities, mingling with their lives and characters so that they became living examples of faith—a faith not hidden in intellects or books, but expressing itself in a dynamic movement which changed conditions and events and the course of life.[78]

Qutb originally took the concept *jahilliyah* from Mawdudi, but reached a more radical conclusion. Making a distinction between modernity and Westernization, Qutb calls for an embrace of modernity but a rejection of Westernization. Modernizing through practical and natural science was encouraged, but western philosophy was completely rejected.[79]

Qutb, of course, is one of the West's "poster boys" for religious devotion dovetailing into fanaticism and violence. As the ideological godfather of the "irrational," totalitarian religious tradition hostile to democratic politics, Qutb often figures prominently in a "clash of civilization" narrative that often centers on *jihad* as a "culturally distinctive expression of Muslim intolerance and arrogance towards non-Muslims" and tends to include an account of the "decline of Islamic civilization" leading toward a "fanatical resentment against modernity." Given such a narrative among secular liberals, it's not hard to understand a desire for "the Islamic world" to be "radically reformed."[80]

The term *jahilliyah* originally referred to the period of "ignorance" in which inhabitants of Arabia lived prior to the revelation of the Qur'an. Though Qutb was not the first writer to apply this term to the societies of his own time that he considered "backward," his work has been crucial in popularizing this use of the term—a use within which, as Euben puts it, "*jahilliyah* becomes a 'condition' rather than a particular historical period, a state of ignorance into which a society descends whenever it 'deviates' from the straight path dictated by Islamic sources."[81]

The experience of the brutal oppression of Nasser's government was one factor shaping the birth in Qutb's thought of a radical orientation. An additional

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[77] Ibid., 165.
[78] Ibid., 14-15.
[79] Mamdani, *Good Muslim*, 69, E-book.
[80] Asad, *Suicide Bombing*, 9.
[81] Roxanne L. Euben, "Killing (for) politics: *Jihad*, martyrdom, and political action." *Political Theory* 30, no. 1 (2002): 15.

influence, according to Mamdani, came from Marxism-Leninism, "already the most important alternative to political Islam in intellectual debates on how best to confront a repressive secular state that had closed off all possibilities of democratic change."[82] This influence is clearest in Qutb's belief in the importance of a vanguard in attacking *jahilliyah*.

Qutb makes a firm distinction between the idea of science as "a tool for man" and science as "the measure of man," and views this distinction as one of the basic signs of a "civilized"—versus a *jahili*—society:

> In the Islamic community . . . material comforts are not elevated as the highest value, at the expense of "human" characteristics, e.g. freedom and honor, family and its obligations, and moral values, as is the case in *jahili* societies.[83]

Crucial too for Qutb is the emphasis on the management of pleasure and pain in *jahili* societies, similar to priorities of secularity. In contrast, Qutb's highest value is "free moral choice," and the civilized community that can be established on it. This choice is only available to the extent that one has replaced all other sovereignties with the sovereignty of God.[84] Jenna Reinbold expands on what is at stake for Qutb:

> Among the "nobler human attributes" which become suppressed within this *jahili* episteme is that of the ability to make a "free moral choice"— an ability that is by far the most important designator for Qutb of human dignity, liberty, and equality. The suppression of such values, so central to the discourse of the Enlightenment, is perhaps a surprising indictment to level broadly against Western culture, but the logic of Qutb's critique becomes clear once we consider, first, the full picture of what he means by "choice," and, second, the deeper implications of his aforementioned aversion to "theory" as a means of generating productive political activity.[85]

The response of Sayyid Qutb to the humiliation of colonialism is not so dissimilar to that of Fanon, but is refracted through the practice of Islam: it is the founding and sustaining of the Muslim community (*umma*) in history, in response to the humiliation of *jahilliyah.*[86]

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[82] Ibid., 63.
[83] Qutb, *Milestones*, 82.
[84] Ibid., 81-82.
[85] Jenna Reinbold, "Radical Islam and human rights values: A "religious-minded" critique of secular liberty, equality, and brotherhood." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78, no. 2 (2010): 456.
[86] Ibid.

For Qutb, as for many Muslim thinkers, even the founding and sustaining of the Muslim community must begin with the *shahada*: "There is no god but God. Muhammad is the messenger of God." For Qutb, the *shahada* contains all of the Islamic faith in a nutshell, serves as the touchstone for determining orthodoxy, and is, in Qutb's thought, what accounts for the uniqueness of Islam. Qutb writes,

> The relationship between God and everything else is that of the Creator to His creatures and of the Lord to His servants. This is the first principle of the Islamic concept and all other principles follow from it. Because the Islamic concept rests on this basic principle, the Oneness of God is its most important characteristic.[87]

Because God and the supernatural order are one, everything that is not God, i.e., the natural order, is also one. For Qutb, this leads to an idea that humanity is also naturally one and that any divisions along racial, religious, etc. lines are artificial and to be discouraged.[88]. For Qutb, any attribute of God that is shared with humans does not respect the absolute separation and oneness of God. In this view, God is not present in the natural order (revelation is his only means of communication to humanity); and there can be no mixing of human and divine nature. As such, the ways of knowing appropriate to God (such as in the realm of ethics) are completely separate from the ways of knowing about the natural world (the realm of science). To believe that science can provide information about the best way to live, or that religious thought can provide information about the natural world, is a categorical error.[89]

For Qutb, one crucial attribute of God often usurped by humans is sovereignty. For a true Muslim, in his opinion, there is no ruler other than God, there is no "leaving to Caesar what is Caesar's." All sovereignty belongs to God. The ability to make law is a purely Divine attribute. Any person who allows this attribute to any human in effect accepts him as Divine. All earthly authorities are to be obeyed only in so far as they merely stand in for the authority of God. To be Muslim for Qutb, it is not enough to go through the ritual actions. To truly live the *shahada*, an individual must neither act as sovereign over another, nor respect the sovereignty of any individual that presumes to act as a sovereign. One must not even allow one's desires

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[87] Sayyid Qutb, *The Islamic Concept and Its Characteristics* (Plainfield IN: American Trust Publications, 1991), 184; quoted in "Qutb's Core Ideas," Albert J. Bergesen, *The Sayyid Qutb Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 15.
[88] Bergesen, "Qutb's Core Ideas," 16.
[89] Ibid.

to be sovereign. Any of these kinds of sovereignty would be a kind of worship, a holding of another as a partner to God.[90] Perhaps, although Qutb does not say this, even violence is sometimes a usurpation of God's sovereignty.

In the final analysis, it is not possible to separate Qutb's understanding of individual (religious) agency from his anxieties about materialism and political disenfranchisement in Muslim societies. Because of this, despite Qutb's strong rhetoric connecting Islam and free moral choice, belief for Qutb, "is never just a matter of individual conscience, but an issue of sovereignty." The Qur'an, according to Qutb, enacts a legal system that is anathema to the formality of modern liberalism. The necessity of an individual's free, unmediated, and active "declaration of faith" in the creation of the Islamic community comes before the establishment of "a mere collection of abstractions and theories, applicable in non-existent conditions."[91]

The truly civilized community, explains Qutb, is "[a] society in which sovereignty belongs exclusively to God and finds expression in its obedience to the Divine Law, and every person is set free from servitude to others." Qutb complains that in adopting "the Western concept of 'religion'— an understanding of religion as merely a name for 'belief' in the heart, having no relation to the practical affairs of life"—these "research scholars" have become victims of the same "defeated mentality" as the materialists. This is true since just as with the materialist worldview, a "research-oriented" understanding of religion does not take proper account of human ability to act.[92]

Qutb offers specific criticism for the "materialism" upon which Enlightenment thinkers built their conceptions of the human and asserts that the rational scientism upon which such materialism is based was not able to bring about the liberty, equality, and brotherhood among humans that it aspired to. In Qutb's view, materialism has failed to bring about "the complete and true freedom of every person and the full dignity of every individual in the community."[93]

As Euben emphasizes, *jihad* for Qutb can thus be seen as "the embodiment of a certain critique of modernity and of a 'desire to secure the well-being of all

[90] Ibid., 18-19.
[91] Qutb, *Milestones*, 61, 28.
[92] Ibid., 62.
[93] Ibid., 82, 80.

humanity.'"[94] Traditionally though, a distinction is drawn between two broad complimentary components of *jihad*: *al-jihad al-akbar* (the greater *jihad*) and *al-jihad al-asghar* (the lesser *jihad*). As Mamdani characterizes it:

> The greater *jihad*, it is said, is a struggle against weaknesses of self; it is about how to live and attain piety in a contaminated world. Inwardly, it is about the effort of each Muslim to become a better human being. The lesser *jihad*, in contrast, is about self-preservation and self-defense; directed outwardly, it is the source of Islamic notions of what Christians call "just war," rather than "holy war." Islam sanctions rebellion against an unjust ruler, whether Muslim or not, and the lesser *jihad* can involve a mobilization for that social and political struggle.[95]

Perhaps surprisingly, Qutb asserts that "*jihad* is thus struggle for the initiation and establishment of this system, which aims at securing freedom of conscience and belief for every person on earth. And this freedom can only be attained by establishing a just government and a just legal and social system, which calls to account anyone who tries to abolish freedom of speech and freedom of belief from the land."[96] The greater *jihad* prepares the individual for the lesser *jihad*.

However, even if both Qutb and Mawdudi proclaim the absolute sovereignty of God, Qutb has a more individually-oriented conception: "A Muslim does not believe that another besides the one God can be divine, and he does not believe that another creature but himself is fit to worship him; and he does not believe that 'sovereignty' may apply to any of his servants." For Qutb, as Euben emphasizes, unlike Mawdudi, the individual is "the true agent of change in history" and "the deputy of divine sovereignty," not the state.[97]

Qutb reserved his strongest critiques for philosophical and other disciplines that suggested ways to live. Concerning the physical sciences and technology, however, Qutb saw that "the pursuit of material progress and the mastery of practical sciences are a divine command and a 'collective obligation' on Muslims." Qutb sees science as valuable only insofar man is a "vicegerent" of God for the material creation. But the key question comes from Weber: "In this manner, scientific

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[94] Euben, "Killing," 13.
[95] Mamdani, *Good Muslim*, 63, E-book.
[96] Qutb, *Islamic Concept*, 12.
[97] Roxanne L Euben, *Enemy in the mirror: Islamic fundamentalism and the limits of modern rationalism: a work of comparative political theory* (Princeton University Press, 1999), 55, E-book.

knowledge is designated as helpful, yet—in a diagnosis reminiscent of Weber—unable to answer "the only question important for us: 'What shall we do and how shall we live?'"[98]

Sayyid Qutb was not the first to raise the alarm about the threat to Islam from a "rationalist epistemology that appeared to be achieving global hegemony,"[99] but is part of a current of thought reaching back to the 1800s. Qutb employed "the ideals of liberty, equality, and brotherhood" in his writings and made other claims about Western society and its worldview. He believes that "Western hegemony has ended" because it is unable to lead to "moral" progress, even though it has led to material progress.[100] Qutb extends this critique to "science" or "theory" in general, the "value neutrality" of which has contributed to the West's failure in moral progress.[101]

Mamdani makes clear Qutb's relationship to "force":

> Echoing the Maoist distinction between ways of handling contradictions among the people and with the enemy, Qutb argued that *jihad* involves both persuasion and coercion, the former appropriate among friends but the latter suited to enemies. In the final analysis, only physical force will remove the political, social, and economic obstacles to the establishment of the Islamic community. The use of force to realize freedom is not a contradiction for Qutb—as, indeed, it is not for America. Islam has not only the right but also the obligation to exercise force to end slavery and realize human freedom.[102]

But is force essential for Qutb, or only the most effective tool he saw for accomplishing his ends? Would he insist on violence?

> When Islam liberates people from these external pressures and invites them to its spiritual message, it appeals to their reason, and gives them complete freedom to accept or reject it. Indeed, Islam does not force people to accept its belief, but it wants to provide a free environment in which they will have the choice to believe."[103]

In Qutb's view, Islam attempts to combat pernicious institutions and traditions that limit real human freedom.[104] *Jihad* is to be pursued so long as the state of *jahilliyah* is present. This means that "authority would taken away from the priests,

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[98] Max Weber, *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (Routledge, 2013), E-book.
[99] Euben, *Enemy*, 67, E-book.
[100] Ibid., 58.
[101] Qutb, *Milestones*, 14.
[102] Mamdani, *Good Muslim*, 69, E-book.
[103] Qutb, *Milestones*, 61.
[104] Ibid., 89.

the leaders of tribes, the wealthy and rulers, and would revert to God."[105] And that "God's authority would prevail in the heart and conscience . . . and in the affairs of life such as business, the distribution of wealth and the dispensation of justice."[106]

The violence that Qutb seems to insist on is meant to combat the seeming intelligence and intentionality of *jahilliyah*. Because it actively resists all attempts to dismantle it, it must be attacked forcefully. But whether these attacks must be violent is an open question.[107] It is certainly easy to see how Qutb has been interpreted as permitting the use of violence to oppose *jahilliyah*:

> This movement uses the methods of preaching and persuasion for reforming ideas and beliefs; and it uses physical power and *jihad* for abolishing the organizations and authorities of the *jahili* system which prevents people from reforming their ideas and beliefs but forces them to obey their erroneous ways and make them serve human lords instead of the Almighty Lord.[108]

And: "This movement does not confine itself to mere preaching to confront physical power."[109]

There are two key weaknesses to Qutb's account. Given that "there is no compulsion in religion," and that Qutb seeks to create the space for "free decision" in religion, he is vague about how an enemy might actually turn to Islam, and what would happen if the enemy did not so choose to turn. Related to this is Qutb's belief that Islamic communities have existed and perhaps even do exist at present which manifest this total adherence to God's law, total commitment to God's sovereignty, and so are qualified to take control of other societies that are not.

Mamdani points out that "here there is more than just a passing resemblance to the dialectics of Marxism-Leninism. Qutb argued that *jihad* is a process beginning with the organization of a vanguard, followed by a withdrawal that would make possible both study and organization and then a return to struggle."[110] In Qutb's words:

> A vanguard must set out with this determination and then keep going, marching through the vast ocean of *jahaliyyah* which encompasses the

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[105] Ibid., 24.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid, 47.
[108] Ibid., 55.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Mamdani, *Good Muslim*, 70, E-book.

> entire world.... I have written *Milestones* for this vanguard, which I consider to be a waiting reality about to be materialized.[111]

Qutb's reformulation of *jihad* has other echoes of Marxism-Leninism. Evoking the Maoist distinction between ways of handling contradictions "among the people" and "with the enemy", Qutb emphasized that *jihad* involves "both persuasion and coercion," the former suited to friends and the latter suited to enemies. In perhaps another echo, Qutb ultimately asserts that only physical violence can remove the social, political and economic impediments to the foundation of the Islamic community. The employment of force to bring about freedom is not a contradiction in terms for Qutb (it is certainly not for America). In his view, Islam has the duty to use force and all other means to end slavery and bring about human freedom. But freedom for what? "Islam, of course. . . . Qutb justifies this move by arguing that, after the constraints of *jahilliyah* are eradicated, the only choice is the sovereignty of God. For only his authority makes choice itself possible."[112]

This *jihad* is not primarily political or defensive, as is sometimes argued by liberal Muslims about *jihad*. Rather, it is "a witnessing of the faith; it is inherent in the faith; to have the faith is to struggle for its sociological implementation in an existing *jahili* world."[113] The goal of *jihad* conceived in this way is "universal freedom."[114] This is not about making everyone Muslim: just about creating the conditions in which individuals may freely choose whatever religion they wish, or none at all, without compulsion. The "matter of belief [is left] to individual conscience."[115] Qutb emphasizes this "proactive, fraternal quality of *jihad*" in his assertion that:

> [t]hose who say that Islamic *jihad* was merely for the defense of the "homeland of Islam" diminish the greatness of the Islamic way of life and consider it less important than their "homeland." This is not the Islamic point of view; it is a creation of the modern age. . . . From the Islamic point of view, any homeland has value only to the extent that it is . . . a center for the movement for the total freedom of man.[116]

Because the structure of *jahilliyah* has intelligence and intention, and actively resists all attempts to dismantle it, it clearly must be attacked forcefully. For this

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[111] Qutb, *Milestones*, 19.
[112] Euben, *Enemy*, 75, E-book.
[113] Bergesen, "Qutb's Core Ideas," 27.
[114] Qutb, *Milestones*, 74-75.
[115] Bergesen, "Qutb's Core Ideas," 28.
[116] Qutb, *Milestones*, 58-59.

reason, Qutb is usually known as an advocate of violence. But whether this aspect of his thought is essential is an open question. The goal, according to Qutb, is a society free of compulsion. As Reinbold puts it,

> the logic of *jihad* offers a powerful means of engaging the specifics of the materialist worldview and the cultures which espouse it, for it confronts precisely those characteristics of secular governance which are so profoundly unfavorable to what he sees as the formation of a community of free, equal individuals: theoretical abstraction, neglect of personal initiative and responsibility, and disregard of free moral choice as representative of the highest human value.[117]

However, not only does Qutb seem to neglect significant aspects of the theological and historical context of *jihad*, but leaves unanswered the important question as to how exactly the physical violence seemingly required by his conception of *jihad* would be able to take away the "barrier" between "Islam and individual human beings." Because of this failure, in Mamdani's estimation, while "Qutb has achieved notoriety in the post-September 11 era as a 'theorist' of *jihad*, his prescription proves less valuable for its detailed account of *jihad* itself and much more valuable for its embodiment of Qutb's aversions and responses to the secularization of the Middle Eastern societies of his time."[118] Mamdani goes on to specifically point out two potential sources of weakness in Qutb's approach:

> in the first place, the theoretical nature ("theoretical" in Qutb's negative sense of the word) of the actual moment of conversion from nonbeliever to believer within the "free environment" created by the jihadist and, secondly, and stemming from this, the rhetorically forceful yet profoundly unconvincing connection drawn by Qutb between the deployment of violence and the reinvigoration of human freedom and dignity.[119]

SHARI'A

Islamic Law, *shari'a*, is another crucial mode through which selves have been disciplined and shaped. The "transcendent" basis of *shari'a* should not be a surprise, but Asad also points to the transcendent basis of secular law, in which "human sovereignty then becomes a kind of transcendent principle, although it does so in a very different way, imposing a different kind of universality."[120] It is understandable that insofar as *shari'a* still serves Muslims as "a spiritual resource, a connection with

[117] Reinbold, "Radical Islam," 467.
[118] Ibid., 468.
[119] Qutb, *Milestones*, 59.
[120] Asad in Scott and Hirschkind, 350, E-book.

God, and a way to discipline the inner self," Muslims might wish for the return of *shari'a* as the foundation for a more just government.[121] Mamdani discusses the key distinction between types of Islamists with respect to the process of interpreting the *shari'a*:

> The key division among radical Islamist intellectuals concerns the status of *shari'a* (Islamic law) and thus of democracy in the state. *Ijtihad* refers to the institutionalized practice of interpreting the *shari'a* to take into account changing historical circumstances and, therefore, different points of view. It makes for a substantive body of law constantly changing in response to changing conditions. The attitude toward ijtihad is the single most important issue that divides society-centered from state-centered—and progressive from reactionary—Islamists. Whereas society-centered Islamists insist that the practice of *ijtihad* be central to modern Islamic society, state-centered Islamists are determined that the "gates of *ijtihad*" remain forever closed. Iqbal, for instance, called for the modernization and democratization of *ijtihad*, so the law could be interpreted by a body elected by the community of Muslims, the umma, and not just the religious ulama. The emphasis on *ijtihad* is also key to the thought of Sayyid Qutb and distinguishes his intellectual legacy from the state-centered thought of Mawdudi.[122]

In terms of challenging the stereotypes found in non-Muslim popular culture, most surprising might be the suggestions that *shari'a*'s current status as a "marker of identity politics" is due to large extent to the efforts of the colonial powers in narrowing of the scope of *shari'a* to issues of personal status, and in promoting this narrowed scope as in fact the most authentically Islamic. Instead, *shari'a* in Hallaq's view (for instance) is better characterized as an "encompassing system of social values, devoted to producing a 'moral community' through the fostering of 'moral individuals.'" The state, or the regime, were of secondary importance. Until the beginnings of colonialism, *shari'a* did not derive its authority from any Muslim regime, and in fact could stand in judgment of them. Unlike the function of law in a modern state, *shari'a* did not concern itself with "what must be done, nor was it engaged in transforming reality or managing or controlling society." Nevertheless, if Hallaq is correct, society under *shari'a* was actually more stable than societies are under state legal systems. As he puts it, *shari'a* "was not subject to the fluctuations of legislation, reflecting the interests of a dominant class—as the modern state is." A

[121] Hallaq, *Impossible State*, 8-9.
[122] Mamdani, *Good Muslim*, 72, E-book.

Muslim land under *shari'a* would be more likely to promote "a moral logic of distributive justice rather than a logic of winner-takes-all."[123]

In Hallaq's view, beginning with the colonial era, *shari'a* became divorced from its natural, supporting "ecosystem," began to lose its original function of producing a moral community, and began to function more as an ideological weapon in the hands of both (neo-) colonialists and their opponents—a battle still very much in evidence today. Perhaps the most compelling aspect of Hallaq's thesis is his description of how *shari'a*, as he describes it, became seen as incompatible with the modern state—and how the modern state took pains to replace, channel and co-opt it. He sets in opposition the "legal pluralism" of *shari'a* and the "spirit of codification" of the legal systems of modern states; it is quite a useful way to examine a wide range of topics in the encounter between Islam and the West. [124]

Against Schacht, for instance, Hallaq suggests in this work, as he does in other writings, that the "doors of ijtihad" never really did close, and that in fact *shari'a* might best be characterized as "an *itjihadic* process, a continuously renewed exercise in interpretation."

WHAT WENT WRONG

The West's focus on freedom, in which the self is ever more powerful and sovereign, has been especially problematic for the inhabitants of the Middle East. As Mahmood Mamdani noted, the famous Orientalist Bernard Lewis presented his notion of the "doctrinal core of Islam" in a book that "was already in page proofs by 9/11" but was published soon after, provocatively titled *What Went Wrong?* Lewis wrote: "To a Western observer, schooled in the theory and practice of Western freedom, it is precisely the lack of freedom . . . that underlies so many of the troubles of the Muslim world."[125] To this, he added the "absence of secularism" as the second explanation for the chasm between contemporary Islam and modernity.[126]

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[123] Wael B. Hallaq, *An introduction to Islamic law* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 166.
[124] Ibid., 86.
[125] Bernard Lewis, in Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the roots of terror* (Harmony, 2005), 37, E-book.
[126] Ibid.

Lewis, and many other Orientalists, do not believe that their prescription is ultimately incompatible with the practice of Islam. But in sharp contrast, Wael Hallaq claims that

> Islamic governance is . . . bound by a sovereign will outside of and higher than itself, whereas the modern state's sovereignty represents an inner dialectic of self-constitution: sovereignty constitutes the state and is constituted by it. These two opposed conceptions of sovereignty will inevitably stand in a deadlock.[127]

I certainly share the anxiety of Saba Mahmood and many others anxiety about the dangers of political Islam.[128] But the need and promise is so great (Gaza? the environment?), that the possibilities ought to be investigated. And this potential weapon fusing principled nonviolence with Qutb's political Islam, if it can be called a weapon, is one we might wish our enemies to employ against us.

For the sort of "passive" agency necessary for my conception of principled nonviolence I will employ a distinction made by Saba Mahmood in *Politics of Piety*, between the more familiar "active" agency and a form of agency "of a peculiar sort, appearing as a sort of passivity."[129] As Mahmood elaborates, this "passive" sort of agency "can be understood only from within the discourses and structures of subordination that create the conditions of its enactment."[130] Outside of these structures, from the point of view of the secular, such passivity can seem, at best, mystical; and at worst, "deplorable," irrational, humiliating, servile and defeatist.

Many even "well-meaning" liberals believe that the "present mess" of the Middle East could be solved, and people like Mohamed would not need to sacrifice themselves, if due to the benevolent influence of the aforementioned freedom, the states of the Middle East were reformed to become "truly modern"—that is, with a Western style liberal democracy, with a free market and free elections to a representative governing body. Asad expresses his frustration with this view:

> I'm not persuaded by all those people in the Middle East who say that there's only one way to move out of the present mess, and that is to become truly modern, and they know exactly what being modern is, It's being like the West. More precisely, this now means acquiring

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[127] Wael Hallaq, *The impossible state: Islam, politics, and modernity's moral predicament* (Columbia University Press, 2012), 201, E-book.
[128] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject* (Princeton University Press, 2011), 28, E-book.
[129] Mahmood, *Politics*, 53, E-book.
[130] Ibid.

> "liberal democracy," a free market and free elections to a representative parliament.[131]

Thomas Friedman, a columnist for the liberal New York Times, is certainly such a booster for secular liberalism. "The West," he writes, is "a state of mind" but is also

> an association of countries with shared interests, institutions and values—particularly the values of liberty, democracy, free markets and the rule of law—which made the post-World War II world, though far from perfect, a steadily more prosperous, free and decent place for more and more people.[132]

As Karl Polanyi (for instance) emphasizes, markets are the focus of liberalism "in thought and deed."[133] And although markets have existed for most of human history, they have not been central as they are now, overshadowing all other concerns.[134] Or, as Asad puts it:

> the modern state is seen not only as the crowning achievement of liberal democracy but also as the basis of a wealthy civilization founded on capitalism in which general concern for human wellbeing can flourish. This is consistent with a widespread belief that, since the end of the eighteenth century, peoples in Euro-America have become increasingly free and humane because freedom and humanity naturally reinforce each other.[135]

Nevertheless, violence has found a place in this paradise, both in war and in punishment, especially for those on the "margins of humanity," such as colonial subjects. Liberal democracies may not use violence against each other, but they are certainly not so constrained in "securing" order or "undermining" enemies' order, or in using violence against those deemed "less than fully human."[136]

Asad refers to the thinking of a certain "Captain Colby," to whom it was "self-evident" that "since uncivilized opponents do not abide by international law, they

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[131] Asad, in *Powers of the Secular Modern*, 346, E-book.
[132] Thomas L. Friedman "Can I Ruin Your Dinner Party? One of the two pillars of the West is in jeopardy." *New York Times*, August 7, 2018, accessed online at https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/07/opinion/can-i-ruin-your-dinner-party.html.
[133] Karl Polyani, *The great transformation: The political and economic origins of our times* (New York: Farrar & Rineheart, 1944).
[134] Clayton Crockett, *Radical political theology: Religion and politics after liberalism* (Columbia University Press, 2013), 85.
[135] Talal Asad, "Reflections on violence, law, and humanitarianism," *Critical Inquiry* 41, no. 2 (2015): 392.
[136] Ibid.

cannot be protected by it."[137] Even those who seem to be protected by the liberal order can see their status change to "uncivilized." And if the uncivilized cannot be made to move into "the freedom and progress that their humanity demands," they must be eliminated "because of their inhumanity." [138] As Asad writes, "In that fight, all civilized rules may be set aside."[139]

Under colonialism there has always been a class of natives who profited especially from the presence of the colonizers. After liberation the clique operated much the same. In the context of the Middle East, Hallaq describes the normal progression thus:

> the postcolonial nationalist elites maintained the structures of power they had inherited from the colonial experience and that, as a rule and after gaining so-called independence for their countries, they often aggressively pursued the very same colonial policies they had fiercely fought against during the colonial period.[140]

This account has usually progressed in the following way: pre-independence policies continue in the post-independence period ("ruling bargains"), which are often seen to include promises of "social justice," "economic development," and the protection of "national interests" in exchange for the acquiescence of the population. Egypt under Nasser is said to have epitomized this arrangement.[141] However, it seems, the bargain gradually changes. As Eva Bellin characterizes it,

> extraordinary access to rent and international support, combined with the less extraordinary proliferation of patrimonially-organized security forces and low levels of social mobilization, together [give] rise, in the lion's share of countries, to coercive apparatuses . . . endowed with extraordinary capacity and will to repress.[142]

More and more, the story goes, these states used their repressive apparatuses to close off civil society, including flows of information and credit. Most economic activity became subject to the rent-seeking behavior of the regime, with only favored enterprises allowed to flourish. More and more, regimes employed the appearance of democratic processes to manage domestic and international opinion, and thereby

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[137] Asad, *Suicide Bombing*, 44, E-book.
[138] Asad, "Reflections," 401.
[139] Ibid., 38.
[140] Hallaq, 17, E-book.
[141] Mehran Kamrava, ed., *Beyond the Arab Spring: The evolving ruling bargain in the Middle East* (Hurst & Company Limited, 2014), 18.
[142] Eva Bellin, "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring," *Comparative Politics* (January 2012): 128-129.

facilitate the increased rents available through integration into the global economic system.[143]

Put differently, the global capitalist order seeks to incorporate Muslim countries (and all others) into itself. If Muslim countries are not to be "left behind," they must organize their societies in essential aspects to be in line with the "best practices" of the capitalist order. Because of this, in Asad's terms, states tend toward many basic "homogeneities."[144]

Nevertheless, for this thesis I will not be focusing further on the material deprivations of the Middle East (even while I do not deny that material conditions are often part of the humiliations that people endure). Rather, following Wael Hallaq, I will operate under the assumption that

> the political, legal, and cultural struggles of today's Muslims stem from a certain measure of dissonance between their moral and cultural aspirations, on the one hand, and the moral realities of a modern world, on the other—realities with which they must live but that were not of their own making."[145]

And thus the sorts of solutions offered by modern liberalism, by the path of moral and economic progress, can only be of limited use. "Humanitarianism" is a leading edge of the progress offered by modern secular liberalism. As described by Asad,

> [it] is in the name of humanity that the modern project of humanitarianism intervenes in the lives of other beings to protect, help, or improve them; it is in the name of humanity that progressivist doctrines of freedom are expressed.[146]

This impulse, providing support for numerous interventions by the West, including colonialism, finds support of its own in liberal values: "the autonomous individual, the private self, and a public world of law and political order," as well as most notably in "the ideological account of the emerging (becoming fully "humanized") modern self: its increasingly clear definition of the self as sole

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[143] Steven Heydemann, *Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World* (Washington D.C.: Saban Center, Brookings, 2007), accessed May 17, 2017, https://www.brookings.edu/wp- content/uploads/2016/06/10arabworld.pdf.
[144] Asad in Scott and Hirschkind, 292-93, E-book.
[145] Hallaq, *Impossible State,* 18, E-book.
[146] Ibid., 394.

proprietor of itself, of self-ownership as the only basis for claiming to be the antithesis of thingness, something anyone may own."[147]

Asad locates a key root of this humanitarianism, the discourse of human rights, and indeed, the modern self, in Kant's ethics:

> Because for Kant moral behavior presupposes the autonomous subject's ability to judge and to act according to transcendent rules, it required a very different kind of theory in which concepts of right and duty replace ideas of sentiment. That aspect of Kantianism, with its rights talk, has become the foundation for humanitarian law.[148]

This ability to make law and obey it, according to Kant, is precisely the source of the "dignity of man" and the proper object of that reverence and awe (as evoked by the "star-filled sky," in Kant's phrase) usually reserved for religion. For Kant, this universal reason is "the supreme principle of morality," and the only firm basis for making any moral decision whatsoever or achieving any shared morality.

In Kant's framework, the will is that part of a rational being that is able to determine through reason what must be done and to commit to it. The will thus has the potential of being completely unconstrained by either natural law or other inclinations and so can seem to possess an absolute autonomy. Even the most depraved or incapacitated individual possesses the potential for this autonomy and so is deserving of the highest respect, in Kant's formulation.[149]

Because a rational being exercises autonomy by making and following universal laws, it is the source of the tremendous dignity of the rational nature such that it is beyond assessments of value. As the rational nature is beyond assessments of value, it is never admissible to make trade-offs between "greater" and "lesser" "amounts" of rational nature. Rational nature is a unique and unexchangeable good.[150]

When a rational being acts in accordance with their good will in the face of other inclinations, they are said to be acting out of duty. In practice it is always impossible to discern whether an individual has acted out of duty or because of other inclinations. For rational beings without a totally pure and good will (e.g., humans), a command is necessary for the good will to be enacted. The form of this command is an imperative. The famous categorical imperative is the basis of all other

[147] Ibid., 397.
[148] Ibid., 398.
[149] Immanuel Kant, and Jerome B. Schneewind, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (Yale University Press, 2002), 57, E-book.
[150] Ibid, 59.

imperatives.[151]

Asad emphasizes that this dignity is completely detached from the individual as citizen or otherwise a subject of the state:

> when Kant wrote of "the Idea of the dignity of a rational being who obeys no law other than that which he at the same time enacts himself," he referred not to the subject of the state (who is substitutable in war and always obliged to obey his country's laws) but to the rational, morally sovereign human being for whom there is no equivalent.[152]

This rational, morally sovereign human being is the secular, liberal human being avoiding pain and seeking pleasure, "assumed in modern market culture"; unfortunately, this picture of the individual as sovereign and self-owning could also, as Asad points out, "be made to yield a defense of slavery and of absolutism."[153]

A refusal of the ideology of the substantiality of the state is a refusal of the state's recognition, a refusal of the subjecthood that the state confers.[154] Thus the autonomous subject and the liberal state are mutually reinforcing, such that the autonomous subject provides the sort of support required by the liberal state, and the liberal state forms the autonomous subject through Althusserian interpellation. This relationship constitutes a sort of dirty bargain, a racket.

For the sake of simplicity, and with apologies to Mahmood, I focus in this thesis on one aspect of agency: the traditional concept of agency whereby individuals resist the attempts of others to impose their will, and instead impose their own will on others. In this conceptualization, the successful resistance allows the possibility of a wide range of agencies (such as Mahmood describes), with a wide range of potential goals. This aspect of subjective agency can also be conceived in terms of the psychoanalytic "ego": the individual construct of self with its apparent ability to do, create, destroy. When oppressed, subject to violence, and/or subject to loss of control, the autonomous "poor little ego" (Lacan's phrase) is not as free as it thinks.

Asad connects the modern, secular emphasis on increasing power and agency, and resisting pain and suffering (and the humiliation they bring), to the notion of "resistance":

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[151] Ibid, 62.
[152] Asad, *Formations*, 228, E-book.
[153] Ibid., 135.
[154] Audra Simpson, *Mohawk interruptus: Political life across the borders of settler states* (Duke University Press, 2014), E-book.

> The tendency to romanticize resistance comes from a metaphysical question to which this notion of "agency" is a response: Given the essential freedom, or the natural sovereignty, of the human subject, and given, too, its own desires and interests, what should human beings do to realize their freedom, empower themselves, and choose pleasure?[155]

Rational thought, in this account, secures its universal scope and authority by performing "a necessary exclusion of all that is bodily, feminine, emotional, nonrational, and intersubjective."[156] Continuing in this mode of explanation, rather than beginning with lived experience—the "flow" of daily life—and thematizing from there, theories based on a metaphysics of presence conceive of Being and the beings in the world as mere "objects present-to-hand": that is, substances with properties. In this way of thinking, a certain sense of subjectivity—ourselves as minds with properties and inner emotions—undergirds all experience. The perspective of "lived experience" that I follow can also be found in Heidegger (in Hubert Dreyfus's reading), which suggests an approach in which the phenomena of "involved . . . pre-conceptual coping" forms the bedrock upon which human activity must be conceived.[157]

The alternative to this tradition of "lived experience" can be referred to as the paradigm of the "philosophy of representation," stretching back thousands of years. The paradigm is perhaps most clearly articulated by Descartes.[158] Briefly, the Cartesian version maintains that all of my experience, indeed who I am, is of/in my mind. As such I am like a puppeteer directing the strings of my body. My mind is *res cogitans*, transparent to itself, in the midst of my body and the world, which is *res extensa* and less certainly known. All of my perception is a consequence of my knowledge. Perceptions are either true or false; any appearance of ambiguity is the result of insufficient or incorrect information. The criterion of truth is a correspondence between my idea and the world. In fact, knowledge is the means by which I relate to the world and to everyone in it. Thus, for example, from a Cartesian

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[155] Asad, *Formations*, 74, E-book.
[156] Mahmood, *Politics*, 52, E-book.
[157] Hubert Dreyfus, "Responses," in *Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*, vol. 2, *Heidegger, Coping and Cognitive Science*, ed. Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 315.
[158] Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 127.

perspective, photographs are about information. On the one hand a photograph is a poor representation of an actual experience; on the other hand, it can help facilitate fuller analysis of certain data, given the inherent limitations of visual processing and memory.[159]

A significant problem with the philosophy of representation is its limited potential for sociality. A dualist perspective such as this is perhaps not sufficient to overcome deep-seated aggressivity. If the other exists for me only through my knowledge of her, her very existence, as it were, can be held in abeyance by simply shuttering my eyes. So fundamental is this separation felt within such a dualist perspective, and the anxiety it produces, that the everyday fantasy that attempts to bridge this lack is known simply as "reality"—namely: that one represents the world, even if only to oneself, and that the world requires such representation to even exist.

While many examples can be offered, the psychoanalysis of Carl Jung offers an especially clear example of this assertion of individuality. The centrality of the ego undergirds his psychology (even if it is always in "dialogue" with the transcendent Self). This is true, Lacan would argue, in all "ego-psychologies"—basically all psychologies but his. For example, Jung's account of his observations of animals on the Athi plains of East Africa illustrates the potential violence of the sovereign subject/ego. If "man" can create, "man" can also destroy.

> Grazing, heads nodding, the herds moved forward like slow rivers. There was scarcely any sound save the melancholy cry of a bird of prey. This was the stillness of the eternal beginning, the world as it had always been, in the state of non-being; for until then no one had been present to know that it was this world. . . Man is indispensable for the completion of creation; he himself is the second creator of the world, who alone has given to the world its objective existence—without which, unheard, unseen, silently eating, giving birth, dying, heads nodding through hundreds of millions of years, it would have gone on in the profoundest night of non-being down to its unknown end.[160]

This gaze that can create and destroy is also contested. Within this logic, if some other "possesses" the gaze, then I must not. And within this logic, the only

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[159] Tad M Schmaltz, ed, *Receptions of Descartes: Cartesianism and anti-Cartesianism in early modern Europe* (Routledge, 2012).

[160] C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, rev.ed., rec. and ed. Aniela Jaffé, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Vintage, 1989), 255-56.

defense against violence are systems of reason, such as Kantian ethics, human rights, and liberal tolerance.

Those who subscribe to the dualist position hold that something extra needs to be added to the living human body, such as "soul" or "mind," in order to make sense of mental activity. For adherents of this position, the mind is typically inner—inside the brain, or inside the body—and governed by the laws of thought, while the world is outside and governed by the laws of physics. The "boundary" between inner and outer in this position has led to many strange philosophical problems, such as how one cannot know for "certain" whether or not other people are mindless zombies, and the idea that our consciousness can be treated like software of some sort.[161]

Dualism's chief rival, physicalism, has two chief varieties. In the "reductive" version, all mental life is seen as a product of physical laws. In this conception, consciousness (and religious testimony, ethics, etc.) is reduced to neurobiology. There are, however, also nonreductive physicalisms which could potentially allow space for a religious conception of the person. A version of this is offered in Murphy and Brown's, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It?* In that work, the authors argue for genuine moral reason and free will, based on conceptions of levels of complexity, self-directed systems, and mental processes necessarily engaged and embedded not just in the body but also the physical world.[162]

However, physicalism itself—even that of Murphy and Brown, which, while avoiding the weird problems of dualism, still faces several problems, including a critique first made by Kant.[163] Namely, if the world comes to us as isolated bits of information, on what basis are they associated together to create the meaningful wholes that we experience? If the world comes to us as meaningful wholes, how does it have that meaning? As Charles Taylor puts it, "the nature of any element is

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[161] Nancey Murphy and Warren S. Brown, *Did My Neurons Make Me Do It? Philosophical and Neurobiological Perspectives on Moral Responsibility and Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[162] Ibid.
[163] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, eds. and trans., P. Guyer and A. W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), A112; quoted in Charles Taylor, "Merleau-Ponty and the Epistemological Picture," *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, eds. Taylor Carman and Mark B. N. Hansen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 36n10.

determined by its meaning, which can only be determined by placing it in a larger whole."[164]

Dualism and physicalism have historically been locked in a "struggle to the death." Since they appear to be the only two options, the weaknesses of each manifest as strengths in the other. At present, it appears that the given the weight of neuroscience, physicalism is in ascendency.

According to Charles Taylor, drawing on the work of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, both dualism and physicalism fail insofar as there is still an 'inner' of some sort, and an 'outer,' of some sorts, and a boundary between. Taylor refers to this as the "mediational perspective." Even theorists such as Murphy and Brown—who attack dualism but are not themselves completely (reductively) physicalist—end up being dualist, simply with the boundary being pushed out into the world.

The key question for Taylor in determining whether something is in the mediational perspective is "can we understand our grasp of the world (whether as maps, images, tendencies toward action, etc.) as something that is, in principle, separable from what it is a grasp of?" Is there a "that through which knowledge of the world takes place?" If the answer to these questions is yes, there is a mediation.[165]

The ethical implications of the mediational perspective are related to those of skepticism. As Charles Guignon suggests, from this perspective the world and other people can appear as objects of some sort. Our life can become dominated by instrumental concerns, and the drive to master the inanimate stuff around us, including other people—who may be zombies anyway. Other people become at best aids or obstacles to my materialist pursuits.[166]

As long as there is some sort of space of reasoning on this side of the boundary, and some sort of causal input on that side of the boundary, we are dealing with a variety of a mediational, dualist epistemology subject to all of the anti-realist problems such as whether other people are zombies or not. The only way out of this dualist position is either to push the boundary all the way in—a reductive physicalism, in which free will, reason and ethics are epiphenomena—or to push the boundary all the way out—denying the boundary between 'us' and 'world' altogether.

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[164] Charles Taylor, "Merleau-Ponty," 31.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Charles Guignon, "Authenticity, Moral Values, and Psychotherapy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles Guignon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 215-239.

In my view, the later solution offers the most profound possibilities for a pacific sociality.

This "pre-conceptual" position requires an allowance of a sense of understanding that "functions in the space of reasons below concepts." In Taylor's example: "my ability to be charming or seductive exists not in my brain, or even in my body and voice, but in body-voice-in-conversation-with-interlocutor."[167] So-called higher functions, such as abstract thought, etc., arise only on the foundation of this everyday coping in the world.

This position of subjectivity as being-in-the-world, shaped by tradition, is the position of Heidegger, as well as of Asad and Mahmood: that is, we are who we are only given the world of practices and traditions in which we participate. It does not make much sense to talk about who we are apart from them. As Taylor puts it, "we are in contact with the reality that surrounds us at a deeper level than any description or significance attribution we might make of it."[168]

Relatedly, given Mahmood's reading of Foucault, that there is no "individuated consciousness" prior to power relations, but only what is produced ("performatively and reiteratively,"[169] in Butler's terms) through those relations. Crucial here is what Foucault terms "the paradox of subjectivation": that "the very processes and conditions that secure a subject's subordination are also the means by which she becomes a self-conscious identity and agent."[170] Or, in Butler's terms, "social norms are the necessary ground through which the subject is realized and comes to enact her agency." Butler "locates the possibility of agency within such structures of power (rather than outside of it) and, more importantly, suggests that the reiterative structure of norms serves not only to consolidate a particular regime of discourse/power but also provides the means for its destabilization."[171]

As suggested by Foucault, Althusser, and others, a crucial premise of the ideology required for the state's efficient functioning is the existence of subjects who

[167] Taylor, "Merleau-Ponty," 34.
[168] Ibid., 46.
[169] Judith Butler, *Excitable speech: A politics of the performative* (Routledge, 2013), 139–40.
[170] Mahmood, *Politics*, 56, E-book.
[171] Ibid., 59.

believe themselves to be "masters of their domains," with fully conscious desires, acting in freedom.[172]

And the state is accorded many of these same qualities that individuals are said to possess, sacred and profane. In Asad's opinion, "this may be because, as Thomas Hobbes famously described it, the state is a 'mortal god'; or, it may simply be that the state is endowed with (a claim to) life eternal." And if the state is also like a god, it seems that the "dictates of reason" have taken the place of God's law.[173]

The "active" and autonomous mode of subjectivity dominant within secularity, crowned by universal reason, and the modern liberal state and rule of law that depend on that reason, can provide only a very fragile guarantee against violence. As Asad writes,

> Natural rights were a necessary part of one's sovereignty, which the state acquired by delegation from the people (whence representative democracy). How was that individual sovereignty to be recognized and protected in a sovereign state? The doctrine of secularism—separating the individual right to (religious) belief from the authority of the state—was intended as an answer to that question." "The essence of the human comes to be circumscribed by legal discourse: The human being is a sovereign, self-owning agent-essentially suspicious of others—and not merely a subject conscious of his or her own identity. It is on this basis that the secularist principle of the right to freedom of belief and expression was crafted.[174]

Law serves a powerful function with respect to the self, the autonomous subject: it is key to the formation and disciplining of modern subjects. As Asad states, "the law always facilitates or obstructs different forms of life by force, responds to different kinds of sensibility, and authorizes different patterns of pain and suffering. It defines, or (as in the present moment of genetic and cognitive revolutions) tries to redefine the concept of the human—and so to protect the rights that belong essentially

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[172] Asad, *Formations*, 231, E-book. Asad adds the following "fine print": "The individual is now encouraged—in morality as well as in law—to govern himself or herself, as befits the citizen of a secular, liberal society. But two points should be borne in mind in relation to this conclusion. First, this autonomy depends on conditions that are themselves subject to regulation by the law of the state and to the demands of a market economy. Second, the encouragement to become autonomous is primarily directed at the upper classes. The lower classes, constituted as the objects of social welfare and political control, are placed in a more ambiguous situation."

[173] Asad, "Reflections," 406.

[174] Asad, *Formations*, 138, E-book.

to the human and the damage that can be done to her or his essence. And it punishes transgressions (of commission and omission) by the exercise of violence."[175]

And yet when it is endowed with legal force, the abstract concept of "humanity" allows authorities to decide who, by virtue of being not human, can legitimately be treated "inhumanely" by the state and its citizens.[176] As Asad emphasizes, "precisely because it is an inclusive category, 'the human' belongs to an exclusive universe that does not contain mere life."[177] Especially because the realm of "cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment" is "closely linked to legal concepts and political interventions," as Asad puts it, the state is a crucial focus for any examination of such violence.

> The old juridically defined self, the self-owning subject, now becomes problematized. Who is to be counted as human, what the capabilities are of the human subject, will be decided through the global market in which property rights and cost-benefit analysis are central. Human rights become floating signifiers that can be attached to or detached from various subjects and classes constituted by the market principle and designated by the most powerful nation-states.[178]

The discontents of the West, those often defined outside of "the human," are often subject disproportionately to the various forms of structural violence, of which there are many, both legal and extra-legal. Structural violence in this formulation might include patriarchy, racism, poverty, capitalism, and other macro—not necessarily intentional—structures.[179] These structures, to quote Ken Booth, "mean no more but no less than persistent social practices, made by collective human activity and transformed through collective human activity."[180] While these structures are hard to see because they are so persistent and collective, they can nonetheless be brutally lethal. As the World Health Organization puts it, "poverty is the greatest killer."[181]

The West is so often the material beneficiary of such violence, but all the same it usually is spared the moral awkwardness of having to acknowledge responsibility. From the point of view of progressivist, universal reason, structural

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[175] Ibid., 259.
[176] Ibid., 128.
[177] Ibid., 162.
[178] Ibid., 163.
[179] James Farmer, *Lay bare the heart: An autobiography of the civil rights movement* (TCU Press, 1998), 25.
[180] Ken Booth, *Theory of world security*, Vol. 105 (Cambridge University Press, 2007), E-book.
[181] Ibid.

violence is simply a deficiency that will eventually be overcome. And indeed this sort of violence is often not even seen by most people as violence; to put it in terms of security, structural violence can allow for a kind of order even while hiding that insecurity which results "directly from existing power structures that determine who enjoys the entitlement to security and who does not."[182]

This structural violence, of whatever form, cannot simply be reduced to the "material" level. Every sort of structural violence supports and is supported by tradition and habitus, including interiorities, developed over many generations of oppression, resistance and collusion over the course of generations.

PAIN AND SUFFERING

As mentioned above, the modern sensibility regarding torture and other sorts of pain is a crucial support of the secular. Asad notes that there must be "good reasons" for pain in the modern West:

> In pre-modern societies of the kind Foucault called Classical, torture was carried out unapologetically and in public. Why does "torture" now typically generate a discourse of secrecy- and- exposure? The belief answer to this question, surely, is that there is now a new sensibility regarding physical pain. Although it occurs frequently enough in our time, the modern conscience regards the inflicting of pain without "good reason" (e.g., to perform a medical operation) as reprehensible, and therefore, an object of moral condemnation. It is this attitude to pain that helps define the modern notion of cruelty.[183]

From the point of view of the modern West, physical pain is degrading. It is one (quantifiable) thing, and it is a thing to be avoided at all costs. Because of this, pain and pleasure become the ultimate grounds for moral decisions. Within this worldview, even all love and all relationship is potentially trumped by fear and pain, as Orwell captures so well in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Winston would have gladly betrayed Julia if only to avoid the torture by rats.[184]

However, consider the example of Shi'a Muslim flagellants expressing their devotion to the Prophet's grandson Hussein on Muharram each year. As Asad notes, "That instance of self-inflicted pain is at once real and dramatic (not 'theatrical'). . . .

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[182] David Roberts, *Human insecurity: global structures of violence* (Zed Books Ltd., 2013), E-book.
[183] Asad, *Formations*, 109-10, E-book.
[184] George Orwell, *Nineteen eighty-four* (Everyman's Library, 2009), E-book.

[It is] a collective rite of religious suffering and redemption."[185] And elsewhere, even more emphatically, Asad writes:

> It is not a secular act that borrows a religious metaphor to make a political statement about prejudice. Nor is it premised on the right to self-fashioning and the autonomy of individual choice. Yet both strike against the modern sensibility that recoils from a willing, positive engagement with suffering. Because for ascetics, as for sadomasochists, pain is not merely a means which can be measured and pronounced excessive or gratuitous in relation to an end. Pain is not action, but passion.[186]

This contrasts sharply with the modern rejection of physical pain in general and of "gratuitous" suffering in particular:

> the modern hostility is not simply to pain, it is to pain that does not accord with a particular conception of being human—*and that is therefore in excess*. "Excess" is a concept of measure. A crucial aspect of the modern attitude to pain rests on a calculus that defines appropriate (calculable) actions.[187]

In the modern West, aside from a few narrow categories (sporting events, medical procedures), suffering from pain is to be minimized at all times. Almost by definition, in secularity the moment of suffering precludes agency and dignity:

> Pain is something that happens to the body or that afflicts the mind. Or so, at any rate, we tend to think. Yet one can think of pain not merely as a passive state (although it can be just that) but as itself agentive. . . . One readily allows that pain may be a cause for action (seeking to end the suffering, say), but one does not normally think of it as action itself.[188]

But most significantly, "as a social relationship pain is more than an experience" because "sufferers are also social persons (animals) and their suffering is partly constituted by the way they inhabit, or are constrained to inhabit, their relationships with others."[189]

HUMILIATION, AGAIN

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[185] Asad, *Formations*, 126, E-book.
[186] Talal Asad, "On torture, or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment," *Social Research* (Winter 1996): 1094.
[187] Asad, *Formations*, 127, E-book.
[188] Ibid., 82.
[189] Ibid., 87.

Humiliation is part of what keeps the oppressed down and keeps the shackles in place. As psychoanalyst Erik Erikson noted, the oppressed "unconsciously believe in the evil image which they are made to represent by those who are dominant: 'a humiliation at the level of identity.'"[190]

Given such suffering, it would seem that agency is the best sort of freedom. And given such an association of nonviolence with the humiliation of suffering, and the endless appeals to be patient with one's suffering and humiliation as Christ was (advice offered to e.g., domestic violence victims), it should not be surprising that there was a substantial backlash against the practice of principled nonviolence by activists such as Malcolm X. He and many others since have offered critiques of absolute or principled nonviolence that claim it is masochistic, self-sacrificing, psychologically destructive, a symptom of "slave morality," and indifferent to justice for the oppressed, ultimately seeming to counsel most clearly quiet submission in the face of an aggressor's violence. [191]

Against this way of thinking, I will suggest that the very action that leads to humiliation with an "active" agency is the action that can lead to transformation when offered by a "passive" subjectivity. Humiliation is thus key data for examining oppression and the response to oppression, such as in this passage from King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail":

> I guess it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say "wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate-filled policemen curse, kick, brutalize, and even kill your black brothers and sisters with impunity; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she cannot go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her little eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see the depressing clouds of inferiority begin to form in her little mental sky, and see her begin to distort her little personality by unconsciously developing a bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son asking in agonizing pathos, "Daddy, why do white people

[190] Erik Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle, in Psychological Issues* (New York: International Universities Press, 1959), vol I, monograph 1, 31; quoted in Gene Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973), 778.
[191] John Howard Yoder, *The War of the Lamb: The Ethics of Nonviolence and Peacemaking* (Brazos Press, 2009), 134.

> treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross–country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger" and your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and when your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never knowing what to expect next, and plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodyness"—then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait.[192]

From the point of view of the autonomous self, to be made to experience pain, to be made to suffer, is a failure of agency and thus a humiliation. When we say that someone is suffering, we normally suppose that he or she is not an agent. To suffer (deprivation, physical or mental pain, or humiliation) is, so we normally think, to be in a (undesirable) passive state. And although this position is sometimes found in Gandhi, I would argue it is an influence of secularity (indeed, Gandhi studied law at the Inner Temple in London).

LACK

A primary mode of subjectivity in modern liberalism can be characterized as "active," in that it attempts to make things happen, and to increase and consolidate its power in the world. We fight against the existential reality that whatever we may make of our lives, our bodies will return to the earth, becoming humus. If one's being-toward-death is not accepted, such a process can be humiliating. But with humility, submission to this existential reality can be a source of freedom. This mode of submission, of passivity, is strongly resisted by the discourse of secularity. The affirmation by the state of the self-substantiality of each individual is predicated on each individual first affirming the substantiality of the state. Some of the statements of Gandhi and King also serve to promote an armored, active subjectivity, emphasizing strength and masculinity. In these modes, courage is seen as an achievement, a badge of the ego. Such a perspective might imply that a strong ego can ward off the suffering of fear.

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[192] "The Letter from Birmingham Jail, " available online at http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/documents/Letter_Birmingham_Jail.pdf

Even the clearest, most careful, sympathetic accounts of Gandhi's principled nonviolence can result in a promotion or affirmation of power, autonomy, sovereignty. For instance, Erik Erikson, most famous for his stage theory of human development throughout the lifespan, has commented explicitly on what he viewed as the strong similarities between psychoanalysis and nonviolence, even claiming that he had "rediscovered psychoanalysis in terms of truth, self-suffering, and nonviolence."[193] He saw nonviolence and psychoanalysis both as "therapeutics"[194] and "truth methods,"[195] requiring the "militant probing of a vital issue"[196] in "a radical spirit of risk and experiment."[197] Erikson felt that nonviolence and psychoanalysis supplemented each other, one dealing with violence towards the adversary and the other with violence directed at the self[198]—violence that might include "our overbearing conscience and our raging affects."[199] For him, the "emphasis [was] not so much (or not entirely) on the power to be gained as on the cure of an unbearable inner condition."[200] Erikson, in the Freudian tradition, viewed the internal conflict as "overbearing conscience" and "raging affects," or superego and id. In the similarities between psychoanalysis and the nonviolent encounter Erikson divined a "convergence in human values which may well be of historical, if not evolutionary, significance."[201]

Erikson's experience as an analyst colored much of his reflection. For example, he saw one key factor in the power of nonviolence as being the willingness to face death for "the sake of one's truth": a situation that people both wish to be in and, at the same time, are extremely afraid of.[202] But perhaps most interesting is Erikson's suggestion that the nonviolent encounter is a sort of "ritual of pacification," analogous to "two stags locking horns and wrestling," as opposed to battling to the death. Erikson does not thereby see nonviolence as a return to nature, but rather the adoption of an evolutionary heritage connected to the reality of humanity's being one species. Similar behaviors can be seen in the ritualized combat of some traditional

[193] Erik H. Erikson, *Gandhi's truth: On the origins of militant nonviolence* (WW Norton & Company, 1993), 439.
[194] Ibid., 247.
[195] Ibid., 245.
[196] Ibid., 439.
[197] Ibid., 250.
[198] Ibid., 437.
[199] Ibid., 439.
[200] Ibid., 437-38.
[201] Ibid., 245.
[202] Ibid., 399.

peoples that have been insulated from outside influences.[203] This is in contrast to the "pseudo-speciation" that occurs, in which groups separate themselves from other groups, see themselves as unique in some way, and resort to violence when this group identity is challenged, perhaps by another group that also sees itself as unique.[204]

In the nonviolent encounter, according to Erikson, Gandhi developed a sort of ritual that allows humans to come together peacefully, both trusting that the violence will go only so far, and allowing the truth of the situation, including the "truth of their larger human identity," to emerge. However, the Eriksonian analytic tradition takes the commonsense view that violence arises primarily in response to threats to the integrity of one's ego or identity from within or without.[205] The goal of Eriksonian analysis, not surprisingly, is thus the "strengthening" of the ego against such threats. In sharp contrast, in the Lacanian tradition strengthening one's ego or identity is thought to increase the likelihood of violence. The goal of analysis and the way out of violence in this tradition are the same, I argue, as the goal at the heart of principled nonviolence: the acceptance of lack at the heart of subjectivity.[206]

Judith Butler seems to make a similar argument, in her assertion that it is in the subject's "opacity to itself that it sustains some of its most important ethical bonds,"[207] and elsewhere, that "only a faulty conscience stands a chance of countering destructive violence."[208]

In the Islamic tradition, the crucial "submission" is not, as Asad discusses, so much an individual relativizing of the will, but more about facing death with equanimity, and about complete obedience to the will of God, as epitomized by the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son, and the willingness of so many prophets to obey God completely, even unto death. About this submission, Asad writes,

> Apart from being necessary to the development of moral discrimination, the endurance of pain is considered to be a necessary

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[203] Ibid., 433-34.
[204] Ibid., 431; two of the relevant anthropological classics are: E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer* (Oxford, 1951); and Pierre Clastres, *Society against the state: essays in political anthropology* (New York: Zone Books, 2013).
[205] Nancy J. Chodorow, *The Power of Feelings: Personal Meaning in Psychoanalysis, Gender, and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 229; Erikson, 435.
[206] Alenka Zupančič, "Ethics and Tragedy in Lacan," in *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan*, ed. Jean-Michel Rabaté (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 184.
[207] Judith Butler, *Giving an account of oneself* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 22.
[208] Judith Butler, *Frames of war: When is life grievable?* (Verso Books, 2016), 175.

> means of cultivating the virtue of *sabr* (endurance, perseverance, self-control) that is itself basic to all processes of virtue-acquisition. Forms of suffering are intrinsic to the kind of agent a devout Muslim aspires to become. The most important form of suffering is the universal experience of dying and death. When "the time comes," the devout Muslim is required to let go.[209]

According to the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, it is not accurate to use "submission" primarily in a sense of inwardness, or of "submission of the ego."[210] Although there is some sense like that, especially in Sufism—for most Muslims the more crucial submission is to the path, the community, the way of God, and as mentioned, the moment of death. A humiliation only for one who has not let go.

From the point of view of the West, this submission, this acceptance of lack, can be reinterpreted in terms of presence and activity, instead of absence and "passivity." Even Gandhi sometimes falls into the secular Western point of view when articulating nonviolence:

> This society must naturally be based on truth and non-violence which, in my opinion, are not possible without a living belief in God, meaning a self-existent, all-knowing living Force which inheres in every other force known to the world and which depends on none and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act.[211]

With apologies to Schmitt, it seems there is a drive towards the transfer of sovereignty to one's self under secularity, and a drive toward the sovereignty of God under a traditional, non-secular way of life. This is not to judge either as better. But in the drive to self-sovereignty there is the pretense of substantiality and durability.

Another way to put it is this: what sort of *telos* is implied by self-sovereignty, and what sort by the sovereignty of God? Here however, what is sought, in contrast to most political theology, is not traditional, conservative or reactionary.[212] "Sovereignty of God" and "Sovereignty of self" in this thesis are not so much guiding ideas as shorthands for traditions. By this formulation, I do not intend to include all aspects of God (or of the subject), but just one: who's in charge? A way of life such as is

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[209] Asad, *Formations*, 94, E-book.
[210] "Islam," *Encyclopedia of Islam (Second Edition) Online*, accessed at https://referenceworks-brillonline-com.libproxy.aucegypt.edu/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/islam.
[211] Mahatma Gandhi, "Gandhi's Political Vision," *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 189.
[212] Jeffrey W. Robbins, *Radical democracy and political theology* (Columbia University Press, 2011), 100.

designated by "sovereignty of God" develops over a person's whole life, and through extensive and complicated interactions and practices. In such a life, as for instance signed by the *shahada*, God is the ultimate arbiter of value, and is in the center instead of the self.

And though both King and Gandhi were careful to emphasize their inadequacies, or their relationship to lack, such emphasis has usually been understood ironically instead as a sort of assertion of moral strength and power. Principled nonviolence is not a stronger, purer form of strategic nonviolence. This acceptance of lack should not be seen as a heroic moral triumph, as it is in the secular mode, but is instead as always colored by moral tragedy.

From the perspective of violence or strategic nonviolence—of political power—flaws need to be smoothed over. This can be seen for instance in a traditional reading of saints' lives—even political saints—as "exemplars of positive human characteristics."[213] Consequently, their lives are unified and made consistent with this purpose. To the extent that Gandhi's and King's practice of principled nonviolence is acknowledged as authentic love of enemy and altruistic service, it is often read as the fruit of great moral heroism and purity, certainly to be admired, but beyond the abilities of most ordinary mortals, and so very difficult to imitate.

OVERCOMING OF HUMILIATION

Both Fanon and Gandhi describe a necessary recovery of self—a necessary overcoming of humiliation—that is required in order for the colonizer to be expelled. In Gandhi's terms, self-rule must begin with the individual. For his part, Fanon famously urges the therapeutic benefits of violence against one's oppressor,[214] which Gandhi surprisingly also affirms, should the humiliated individual not have "assimilated the non-violence spirit."[215] Such a transformed understanding could allow individuals to judge for themselves whether or not a given law or situation was "repugnant to . . . conscience."[216] For Gandhi, the transformation of understanding required a range of ascetic practices. For both Fanon and Gandhi, experience working

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[213] Ibid., 162.
[214] Fanon, *Wretched*, 94, E-book.
[215] Mahatma Gandhi, *The collected works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India, 1939), 77:343.
[216] Gandhi, Collected Works, 10:294.

and living with the poor was crucial to this transformed understanding, specifically a slackening of the compulsion towards self-sovereignty.

About this coming together of such an unlikely pair as principled nonviolence and political Islam, Gandhi might have observed (as he often did) that "there is no other God than Truth" and that "the only means for the realization of Truth is nonviolence (*ahimsa*),"[217] even suggesting to the readers of his Autobiography that if "every page" of those "chapters" did not proclaim this, he would "deem all [his] labour in writing . . . to have been in vain."[218] That is, Gandhi would perhaps have agreed that truth arises from a meeting of thesis and antithesis, but only on the condition that the meeting is nonviolent.

In this thesis I follow Judith Butler in focusing on those subjectivities offering resistance to "the dominating and subjectivating modes of power" ("counter-hegemonic modalities of agency."[219]), just in order to simplify my argument. Along with Butler, the present work is concerned with "the violence . . . normativity enacts and the way in which it delimits the possibilities of livable human existence;" it also hopes to be a "political praxis aimed at unsettling dominant discourses."[220] This alignment with Butler flows from a similar concern to promote "radical democratic politics." This is in no way to dispute Mahmood's claim that a whole dimension is thereby lost, or that "agentival capacity" is "[not] entailed . . . in the multiple ways in which one inhabits norms," or finally that "norms are not only consolidated and/or subverted . . . but performed, inhabited, and experienced in a variety of ways."[221] For the sake of simplicity, I will focus on just two aspects of agency, "active" and "passive." Again, the "passive" aspect of subjectivity is a marker of that sort of way of life that makes principled nonviolence possible.

The process of "formation" through which *satyagrahis* mold themselves (developing, for instance, a "passive" sort of agency) falls under the Foucauldian register of ethics, which refers to "those practices, techniques, and discourses through which a subject transforms herself in order to achieve a particular state of being, happiness, or truth."[222] This subject does not develop autonomously, but rather

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[217] Mahatma Gandhi, *Gandhi's autobiography* (Public Affiars Press, 1948), 615-16.
[218] Ibid., 268.
[219] Mahmood, *Politics*, 61, E-book.
[220] Ibid., 60.
[221] Ibid.
[222] Ibid., 67.

through "the limits of a historically specific set of formative practices and moral injunctions that are delimited in advance"—what Foucault characterizes as "modes of subjectivation."[223] These include "corporeal and body techniques, spiritual exercises, and ways of conducting oneself."[224] Similarly, the "doers" of principled nonviolence that I will be focusing on, like the pious women of Mahmood's account, "are the products of authoritative discursive traditions whose logic and power far exceeds the consciousness of the subjects they enable."[225]

THE CRUCIFIXION

The crucifixion represents a still-living tradition and authoritative voice on violence, pain and passivity. Asad's words here captures its centrality:

> [The crucifixion] also constitutes, in and through violence, the universal category of "the human" to whom the gift is offered (unlike Samson's suicide that reclaims the identity of a particular nation). In short, in Christian civilization, the gift of life for humanity is possible only through a suicidal death; redemption is dependent on cruelty or at least on the sin of disregarding human life.[226]

Of specific relevance to this thesis is how the crucifixion was refracted through "theories of atonement," or theories of how the crucifixion was a "saving" event for humankind. Asad notes the special importance of "Christ's final agony and its meaning for human redemption. They show how, through image, word, and deed, Christ's cruel death on the cross helped to create among pious Christians a distinctive sensitivity to human pain."

The crucifixion, and theories of atonement in particular, have existed in dialogue with liberalism itself. About this, Asad suggests

> that the cult of sacrifice, blood, and death that secular liberals find so repellent in pre-liberal Christianity is a part of the genealogy of modern liberalism itself, in which violence and tenderness go together. This is encountered in many places in our modern culture, not the least in what is generally considered 'just' war.[227]

Nonviolence is one of the places the trope of "violence and tenderness" together is

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[223] Ibid., 68.
[224] Asad in Scott and Hirschkind, 291.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Ibid., 86.
[227] Ilana Feldman, *In the name of humanity: The government of threat and care* (Duke University Press, 2010), 14.

encountered as part of modernity. Eventually, however, "secular sensibilities" "assumed a more active attitude to pain by refusing in all conscience that human suffering had any virtue whatever and elevating the virtue of compassion in relation to it."[228]

The functions of pain I am examining have been "routed" through the traditions and discourses of Christianity. In medieval Christendom, for instance, the Crucifixion allowed a narrative closer to what Asad is envisioning than does the secular worldview, which mostly views with horror a redemption of humanity that is "dependent on cruelty." In the medieval period, one of the roles of the Crucifixion was a model for punishment, so that a "victim's suffering [was] seen as the repayment by which social and metaphysical order [could] be restored . . . . [It was also seen as] a means of cultivating absent virtue, [and] as an example to others of the death that is at once sin and the cleansing of sin."[229]

Specifically, for example, this narrative was seen to undergird the "passivity" of the Christian martyrs, for whom martyrdom was "an act of triumph" in imitation of Christ on the cross. Their receptivity to pain was part of both their agency, and their sociality, as Christians. Though Asad sees the early Christian claim that this passivity represented "a symbol of victory over society's power" as "inapposite," it was in fact precisely the sort of socially created agency that offered a decisive challenge to the society of the day. These sorts of processes can also be observed in medieval "ritual drama" (possibly even including self-inflicted wounds), or in the cultivation of obedience in "monastic rites" in the medieval period.

The ability to valorize this passivity was (as Asad argues concerning the story of Oedipus) the result of virtues undergirded by a certain tradition and *habitus* not resting on "universal emotions" but rather on "historically specific emotions that are structured internally and related to each other in historically determined ways." These in turn are not simply the product of readings of symbols, but of "processes of power."[230]

A LURE FOR VIOLENCE

The law treats the nonviolent protestor as an individual law breaker, not the

[228] Ibid., 87.
[229] Asad, *Suicide bombing*, 94.
[230] Asad, *Genealogies*, 150, E-book.

member of an organized minority group that can compel changes from the majority groups. From the secular point of view, the protestors have violated the law, they are being unreasonable, and to that extent have suffering inflicted upon them, which is the reasonable, rational penalty, proportionate to the crime.

As Hannah Arendt notes about civil disobedience, quoting the jurist Carl Cohen, "Obviously, the law cannot justify the violation of the law, even if this violation aims at preventing the violation of another law."[231] This violation of the law acts as a lure for the authorities, just as bait attracts greedy fishes.

This process of nonviolence seems to require the violence of the authorities for the ritual to succeed. This lure is structurally analogous to earliest, "classic" sort of atonement theories portrayed Christ as bait in a trap for the devil.[232]

There were many variations. Those variations in which Christ was some sort of bait, as in a mousetrap (St. Augustine), or there was some deception of the devil, have often been dismissed by atonement theologians as "repulsive" or "mythological."[233] But this is a serious tradition in Christianity, and was in fact not too different from accounts of the "saving effect" of Christ's crucifixion dominant for the first thousand years after Christ. About this sort of atonement theory Origen quotes St. Paul in approval:

> We speak God's wisdom in a mystery . . . which none of the rulers of this world knoweth: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. (I Cor II 7-8).

Gustaf Aulen explains the idea underneath these older accounts of Christ's atonement:

> God was present, hidden, in the despised man Christ, in His lowliness, and self-devotion to suffering and to death. This is the idea that underlies the image of the devil's deception. In Him the mightiest of all powers was present, hidden; but the 'enemies' did not understand this fact when they assaulted Him.[234]

Principled nonviolence analogously offers a sort of forgiveness even when the opponent does not want it. There is so often collusion and seduction (or a "conflict of

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[231] Hannah Arendt, "Civil Disobedience," *Crises of the republic* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1972), 99, E-book.
[232] Gustaf Aulen, *Christus victor: An historical study of the three main types of the idea of atonement* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 52-53.
[233] Ibid., 1.
[234] Ibid, 110.

traditions") in situations of oppression and that it is not possible to clearly assign blame. We are so often at least partially the architects of our own and others' suffering, often without awareness. Assigning blame, I assert, is a practice connected to the secular fantasy of liberal autonomy. And even when blame is so apparently clear, is it actually not helpful in the goal of resolving conflict.

The tradition of nonviolence suggests a "passionate investment in the Truth of beliefs that guide behavior." The modern liberal/skeptical point of view, in contrast, regards such passionate conviction to be "uncivilized" as well as a perpetual source of danger to others and of potential pain to oneself. As Asad puts it, "beliefs should either have no direct connection to the way one lives, or be held so lightly that they can be easily changed."[235] "Passionate belief" is suspect in secularity.

The presence of the tradition of S/M is a curious exception present within modern liberalism. Asad compares it to practices in the non-West considered from a "reasonable" perspective as a product of false consciousness:

> the principle of consenting adults within the bounds of the law works by invoking the idea of free choice based on individual autonomy, the presence of consenting adults abroad may often be taken to indicate mere 'false consciousness'—a fanatical commitment to outmoded beliefs—which invites forcible correction.[236]

Nonviolence resembles the "liturgical forms" of S/M, sharing with Christianity a "theatrical iconography of punishment and expiation."[237] And similar to S/M, the "economy of Christianity is the economy of conversion: the meek exalted, the high made low." S/M also "performs the paradox of redemptive suffering, and like Christianity, it takes shape around the masochistic logic of transcendence through the mortification of the flesh: through self-abasement, the spirit finds release in an ecstasy of abandonment."[238]

PAIN, TRUTH AND RELATIONSHIP

Asad mentions the insight of Judith Perkins in her book *The Suffering Self,* in which she states that early Christian martyrologies "refuse to read the martyrs' broken

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[235] Asad, *Formations*, 119, E-book.
[236] Ibid., 128.
[237] Anne McClintock, "Maid to order: Commercial fetishism and gender power." *Social Text* 37 (1993): 106.
[238] Ibid.

bodies as defeat, but reverse the reading, insisting on interpreting them as symbols of victory over society's power."[239] Asad expands on the theme:

> Far from shunning physical suffering, the martyrs actively sought to live it. Like Christ's passion on the cross, the martyrs' passivity was an act of triumph. Their openness to pain was essential to their agency as Christians.[240]

Here I suggest that Talal Asad's connection between the concepts of truth and pain, especially as developed in regards to Christian penitential practices and the practice of the ordeal, provides a helpful frame to consider the truth of structural violence, as evidenced by the pain of nonviolent resisters in a crucial incident of nonviolence in the struggle for Indian independence.

"Tradition" is also an important touchstone for Asad, here and elsewhere, one borrowed originally from Alasdair MacIntyre:

> I have used the term tradition in my writings in two ways: first, as a theoretical location for raising questions about authority, time, language use, and embodiment; and second, as an empirical arrangement in which discursivity and materiality are connected through the minutiae of everyday living...Through [tradition] one can change oneself—one's physical being, one's emotions, one's language, one's predispositions, as well as one's environment.[241]

"*Habitus*" is another important, related, concept (neglected in MacIntyre, according to Asad), which Asad uses to refer to "the predisposition of the body, to its traditional sensibilities." This term specifically refers to how "specific virtues are defined and the attempt is made to cultivate and enact them."[242] In Asad's thinking, both tradition and habitus are important counterweights to the dominant view of agency, the history of which is the "secular history of freedom from all coercive control, a history in which everything can be made, and pleasure always innocently enjoyed . . . ." This "forensic" model of agency, with responsibility as if to a court of law as the basis for guilt or innocence, above all seeks to "create itself."[243] As mentioned previously, Asad views this as a sort of "moral insanity," in which "the

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[239] Judith Perkins, *The suffering self: Pain and narrative representation in the early Christian era* (Routledge, 2002), 152.
[240] Asad, *Formations*, 88, E-book.
[241] Talal Asad, "Thinking about tradition, religion, and politics in Egypt today," *Critical Inquiry* 42, no. 1 (2015), 166.
[242] Asad in Scott and Hirschkind, "Interview," 343.
[243] Asad, *Formations,* 75, E-book.

necessary pain of living becomes disconnected from this practical knowing and being known."About the contrast, living sanely, Susan Wolf writes:

> The desire to be sane is thus not a desire for another form of control; it is rather a desire that one's self be connected to the world in a certain way—we could even say it is a desire that one's self be controlled by the world in certain ways and not in others.[244]

This sanity requires both a knowing and being known by the world, on a practical level. Moral agency can then be thought of in terms of how one engages with the world and others at the level of tradition and *habitus*.

Given this orientation towards "sanity," Asad is careful in his work to avoid an "overvaluing of consciousness" or "intention" in explaining what humans do. Rather, Asad is concerned with "the way the living body subjectifies itself through images, practices, institutions, programs, objects—and through other living bodies. And therefore with the way it develops and articulates its virtues and vices."[245]

The value of this concern is seen especially clearly in how Asad approaches pain and suffering: by looking closely at how pain is actually expressed in both contemporary and historical practice. Asad's approach is in stark contrast to the more common tendency to see pain as an unmitigated evil that is opposed both to rationality and the liberal tradition: a brute given of possessing a body, and something to simply be gotten rid of as quickly as possible.

How might Asad's approach be used to explore pain in the context of principled nonviolence? First, to summarize Asad's own exploration of pain in the contexts of penance and torture in the medieval Europe, pain seems to have often been expressed as a positive participation in "Christ's suffering." In other contexts, pain might assume various other functions, such as cleansing, restoring, and creating responsiveness to authority and truth-bringing—whether via 'exposing the truth' that is already "in" a body or actually bringing it into existence.

Asad's approach owes much to Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, which charts a shift from an approach of torture as an expression of "regal power" to one more in line with the many other disciplinary practices seeking to shape the body into an ideal "end product," such as "the reformed, socially useful, soundly reasoning ex-

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[244] Ibid., 76.
[245] Asad in Scott and Hirschkind, 258, E-book.

criminal."[246] More generally, how do the forms of power as expressed in practices such as torture and penance work to help create various "potentialities—individual, social and cultural?"[247]

For example, as opposed to what might be commonly expected, the pain of torture in the context of the ordeal, or even of judicial torture, was a sort of battle for truth in which the scales of justice were balanced for the unjust while serving as a "mark of exculpation" for the innocent. Thus, in addition being part of an investigation, "there was [in the ordeal] also an element of the duel."[248] The pain in this context thus has an element of being active and agential, not simply "passive" (in the sense in which the modern West would use the term). I might say that awareness of and openness to such shifts is an important part of what Asad terms "living sanely in the world."[249] The "insane" alternative makes "the integral human body" its moral center, and so focuses on ending "human suffering," thus making it hard to see any role for pain in sanity or sociality. The mainstream, secular world—experiencing "the increasing triumph of individual autonomy"—has a clear narrative about the connection between pain and agency (as in this case, with a suffering medical patient):

> power—and so too pain—is external to and repressive of the agent, that it "subjects" him or her, and that nevertheless the agent as "active subject" has both the desire to oppose power and the responsibility to become more powerful so that disempowerment—suffering—can be overcome.[250]

Rather than emphasize an augmentation of personal autonomy, a response to pain can instead allow a more relational mode to occur:

> What a subject experiences as painful, and how, are not simply mediated culturally and physically, they are themselves modes of living a relationship. The ability to live such relationships over time transforms pain from a passive experience into an active one, and thus defines one of the ways of living sanely in the world.[251]

Pain can enlarge the self, and generate truth and reconciliation, even perhaps the "redefinition of an uncertain social relationship" in "truer" terms: "the restoration

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[246] Asad, *Genealogies*, 99, E-book.
[247] Ibid., 94.
[248] Foucault in Asad, *Genealogies*, 100, E-book.
[249] Asad, *Formations*, 86, E-book.
[250] Ibid., 74.
[251] Ibid., 86.

of truth and justice."[252] All of this is perhaps clearest in the medieval institution of the ordeal, in which disputes were settled most directly by the accuser and accused, with little interference by any judicial authority. As Asad points out, the process had "essentially nothing to do with resolving doubt", but instead produced "an unequivocal outcome on which a clear decision about social relations [could] be made."[253] Truth was not the result of pain; rather, the pain was the truth. As Asad states it, "In [this] practice of torture, pain, confrontation and truth were bound together; they worked together on the patient's body."[254]

The outcome of the ordeal, the restoration of a certain sort of sociality, did not require the pain to be of the bodies of the accuser and/or accused. Rather, "the bodies of substitutes might do just as well."[255] No doubt this possibility can also be seen reflected in the earliest, dominant "theory of Christ's atonement," in which the debt of humanity's sinfulness was settled by another—namely Christ, by his "innocent blood."

As usually viewed by most writers, these ordeals, as well as procedures which allowed "divination by auguries and sorcerers," were seen as coming from "the mythological stage of the human mind." They viewed the progression from the institution of the ordeal to the institution of judicial torture as a step—a "half-way house"—towards greater rationality, from "divine judgment" to "purely human proof."[256] As Asad describes it:

> Historians of the Middle Ages tend to describe these changes as progressive ones, as being propelled in a rational direction. I was concerned to problematize that, to argue for the earlier stage being equally rational. As an anthropologist, this came naturally to me in the sense that I had learned to see every way of life as having its own reasons.[257]

The shift from so-called "divine judgment" to "purely human proof" was dramatic. Judicial torture was intended to produce facts about what had been done and said, rather than determining the disposition of the conflict, as in the ordeal. And the judicial process required a magistrate. What motivated this change toward greater rationality?

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[252] Asad, *Genealogies*, 113, E-book.
[253] Ibid., 102.
[254] Ibid., 100.
[255] Ibid., 103.
[256] Ibid., 100.
[257] Asad in Scott and Hirschkind, 299.

> duels were anarchic, ordeals were unpredictable, and the inquisitorial system allowed, in a way that the older procedures could never do, a more persistent, more pervasive exercise of centralized control. Thus, torture may be seen as a ruthless extension and intensification of this dominating, rationalizing power.[258]

In other words, "the reforming Church did not rediscover rationality, it redefined it." In addition to the shaping practices of the ordeal and judicial torture, Asad describes the shaping practices of penance and monastic formation—Foucaultian "technologies of the self"—as part of the "same story" of "applying pain in the interests of truth." These technologies do not simply depend on psychological conditioning, but also include a broader "transformation of preexisting ideas, feelings, and memories." This is not the "self-invention" of the self-contained "buffered" self, but is instead a discipline based in tradition, in a complex relationship with "other selves," including with one's fellow sinner monastics, one's spiritual directors, with "the Almighty," and even with "the Enemy...hidden there under the appearance of oneself." It was not a process of self-augmentation: "The will that the monk's vocation requires him to cultivate is not his own but the Lord's." Empathy was a key capability for this process, to "enter into, know, and feel the psyche of another," and be known in return. And crucially, this process was necessarily ongoing, insofar as "there [could] never be a full cure in this world, merely a continuous process of curing symptoms."[259]

Asad's explorations of the linkages between pain and truth have much to offer an exploration of nonviolence. What sort of phenomenon is nonviolence, and more importantly, as an intervention, how might it be strengthened? The potential of facilitating the coming together of enemies, promising forgiveness and reconciliation, based on courage—what could be more urgent to explore? It is tempting to believe there is something universally human here. After all, all humans value courage, love and self-sacrifice, right? Asad recognizes this urgency about violence, writing, "If the development of human capacities and human powers is limitless, do they not spell the continuous destruction of existing forms of life—and therefore the continuous perpetuation of insecurity?"[260]

The ritualized, nonviolent encounter that occurred at Dharasana as part of the

[258] Asad, *Genealogies*, 109, E-book.
[259] Ibid., 126.
[260] Asad, "Reflections," 398.

Indian Independence Movement has many similarities with the institution of the ordeal as described by Asad. Not so much because of historical connections, although those might exist (Gandhi was in fact heavily influenced by Christian thinkers of nonviolence, such as Tolstoy and Ruskin),[261] but more so because both situations are truth practices depending on pain.

Dharasana is only one dramatic instance of principled nonviolence. Because in this instance the strangeness is especially visible, the phenomenon is revealed more clearly. The sacrificial aspects of nonviolence in the Indian context are well captured in one of the most famous and well-studied incidents: the famous offering of nonviolence at the salt works at Dharasana in 1930, in which hundreds of satyagrahis were injured. This action was part of a larger campaign to protest against the British monopoly and tax on salt. It had been forbidden even to manufacture salt for personal use. The event at the Dharasana salt works, and the larger campaign, were well captured in Attenborough's film, *Gandhi*.

The objective was to nonviolently take control of the salt works. At their commander's signal, the protestors moved toward the works, defying police orders to halt. They moved forward in rows and were struck down by native police with steel-tipped staffs, or *lathis*. Perhaps the most famous foreign account of this action was that provided by the United Press correspondent Webb Miller. According to him, the protestors "did not even raise an arm to deflect the blows," nor were there "outcries from the beaten [protestors]."

Because of the tremendous impact of his report on larger public opinion, I quote it at length:

> Much of the time the stolid native Surat police seemed reluctant to strike. . . . At other times the police became angered, whereupon the beating would be done earnestly. During several of these incidents I saw the native police deliberately kick lying or sitting volunteers who refused to disperse. And I saw several instances where the police viciously jabbed sitting volunteers in the abdomen with the butt end of their *lathi*. . . .
>
> In eighteen years of reporting in twenty-two countries, during which I have witnessed innumerable civil disturbances, riots, street fights and rebellions, I have never witnessed such harrowing scenes as at Dharasana. The Western mind can grasp violence returned by violence, can understand a fight, but is, I found, perplexed and baffled by the sight of men advancing coldly and deliberately and submitting

[261] Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, 6.

> to beating without attempting defense. Sometimes the scenes were so painful that I had to turn away momentarily.

On this Webb writes, "My reaction to the scenes was of revulsion akin to the emotion one feels when seeing a dumb animal beaten—partly anger, partly humiliation. It was to the description of these reactions that the Bombay censorship authorities objected among other things." [262]

The law-breaking actionists, the "satyagrahis," marched slowly toward the gates of the salt works, towards guards armed with steel-tipped staffs. Row by row, as they came to the gate they were clubbed down. Some were seriously injured, but none so much as attempted to deflect the blows.[263] To a "modern" sensibility, there is something sickening about the scene, with the protestors so lacking in "self-respect" that they did not even avail themselves of their "right" to self-defense.

As in the ordeal, the enduring of the pain, without retaliation, is a sign of innocence, as judged by God and others. Or better, it represents a bracketing of the question of innocence and instead replaces that question with a saner restoration of the relationship between those who were seen to be enemies, by a revelation of the truth through the wounded bodies of the satyagrahis. And as mentioned, here as with the medieval European procedures of spiritual formation, there is the necessity of penance and spiritual formation even before the event leading to reconciliation occurs. These are "structures of domination," including those "not rooted directly in force or consent." And as in the institution of the ordeal, it is not necessary even that the guilty are those who suffer.

Building upon the insights of Ashis Nandy, I believe it is possible to discern in Gandhi's program his hope for the gradual movement of the Indian Masses from humiliated subjugation, to courageous self-possession and principled nonviolence.[264] In the Dharasana action, for instance, the satyagrahis stand in for the real victims of structural violence: the Indian masses. Brutality is made visible in the arena of the body—starved, humiliated, wounded. The settler's guilt (not the guilt of the staff-

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[262] Webb Miller, *New York Telegram*, dispatch dated 22 May 1930; quoted in Gregg, *Power of Nonviolence*, 25-26; see also Webb Miller, *I Found No Peace: The Journal of a Foreign Correspondent* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940), 194.
[263] Webb Miller, quoted in Richard B. Gregg, *The power of nonviolence* (New York: Schocken, 1966), 25.
[264] Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), E-book.

wielding guards) is inscribed on the wounded satyagrahis' bodies; not metaphorically, but really.

The emphasis here should be placed not on violence as such but on unprompted action when all legal political means are blocked. Because, for Arendt, as Asad stresses, "the possibility of acting politically is part of what makes men individual and therefore human. It is also what offers them a 'secular form of immortality.'"[265]

Bodies that take on their suffering—that will their suffering—merge agency and suffering. Bodies whose suffering is an expression of agency, who have chosen suffering—such that every attempt by the e.g. state to limit the agency of the oppressed, to limit their power/agency through imposing suffering on them (as punishment or disincentive) becomes perhaps a seeming bolstering of agency—is from the secular standpoint an overcoming of humiliation, a development of courage.

NONVIOLENCE

Relying on the work of Fanon and Gandhi, I will suggest an analogy to those subjects of colonial oppression that can be humiliated, and the necessity of avoiding or countering that humiliation even by violence if necessary. For such a subject, perceiving itself as autonomous, the self-suffering advocated in principled nonviolence can only appear as complicity with the oppressor. Indeed, at a psychic level, the goal of this humiliated subject, as the subject sees it, must be to avoid humiliation and do what is necessary to gain self-respect and autonomy.[266]

Could there be an alternative way to preserve the radicality of principled nonviolence without underwriting the continuing suffering of those under the thumb of oppression? We can begin to answer this question by examining Gandhi's advice:

> If you feel humiliated, you will be justified in slapping the bully in the face or taking whatever action you might deem necessary to vindicate your self-respect. The use of force, in the circumstances, would be the natural consequence if you are not a coward. But if you have assimilated the non-violent spirit, there should be no feeling of humiliation in you.[267]

[265] Asad, *Suicide Bombing*, 47.
[266] Fanon, *Wretched*, E-book.
[267] Mahatma Gandhi, *Harijan*, 9 March 1940.

Similarly, King, urging nonviolence to a crowd of supporters as they returned victorious to the buses in Montgomery, made the distinction in these terms:

> If cowardice was the alternative to violence, I'd say to you tonight, use violence. . . . Cowardice is as evil as violence. What I'm saying to you this evening is that you can be courageous and yet nonviolent.[268]

Gene Sharp is one of the most influential theorists of mass nonviolence. His articulations of nonviolence and nonviolent movements predominate among strategic explanations of nonviolence currently dominant in academic treatments, and has arguably inspired and guided numerous politically successful movements of strategic nonviolence over the past half-century.[269]

Sharp notes the importance of the opponent's self-image. If the opponent begins to question her earlier assumption of the "grievance group" as being "nonhuman" or "outside the common moral order," it will be difficult for her to maintain her positive self-image, which depends on her image of the actionists. Only if she changes behavior will she be able to keep a positive self-image. Self-suffering can also serve to close the difference between actionists and opponents. Between them, respect is a result of the actionists' bravery; the opponent has a more positive view of actionists, and the actionists have a more positive view of themselves.[270]

Sharp notes that suffering is necessary in many kinds of nonviolence, even in strategic nonviolence seeking to coerce the opponent. In principled nonviolence, the ability and willingness to suffer the counter-actions of the opponent, and the perception of that suffering by all involved,[271] are an important part of depriving the opponent of legitimacy, the action of what I am referring to as moral-strategic nonviolence. At a certain point in a struggle, Sharp writes,

> Even injuries and deaths incurred in struggle are not viewed as cruelties inflicted on helpless victims but as the price of change paid by determined resisters struggling to alter their present condition and

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[268] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Address to MIA Mass Meeting at Holt Street Baptist Church," 14 November 1956, in *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Volume III: Birth of a New Age, December 1955-December 1956*, eds. Clayborne Carson, Stewart Burns, Susan Carson, and Peter Holloran (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 3:430; quoted in Kosek, 216.

[269] Sheryl Gay Stolberg, " Shy U.S. Intellectual Created Playbook Used in a Revolution," *New York Times*, 16 Feb 2011 [accessed online at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/17/world/middleeast/17sharp.html]

[270] Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, 724.

[271] Ibid., 555.

to create their own future.[272]

However, in the action of principled nonviolence, the suffering of the actionists is often seen as the decisive factor in bringing about the actionists' demands through the conversion of the opponent, through a radical shift in the opponents' beliefs about and attitudes toward the actionists.

Sharp notes that the suffering taken on must be in the pursuit of the goal of the action, and should be undertaken by those who are actually hurt by the opponents—not some third party (which might result in resentment, as it did during the civil rights movement). Self-suffering can serve to close the difference between actionists and opponents. Between them, respect grows out of courage; the opponent has a more positive view of grievance group; and the actionists have a more positive view of themselves.

It is part of many critiques that nonviolence has very little effect beyond "moral suasion" and that it is primarily about "witnessing" regardless of the outcome or effectiveness (if it has some effect). Rather, it is most commonly held that it is through moral/strategic impacts, effects of power in the moral realm.

To achieve this, suffering willingly taken on was of decisive import. Gandhi wrote that

> If you want something really important to be done you must not merely satisfy reason, you must move the heart also. The appeal of reason is more to the head but the penetration of the heart comes...from suffering. It opens up the inner understanding of man.[273]

Those, such as Gandhi, who claim that principled nonviolence is actually effective at transforming violent situations, assert that the element most significant to the effectiveness of nonviolence is real love for the opponent, manifest through suffering willingly taken on, which leads to the opponent's conversion.

King often wrote in similar terms. Here, his emphasis is on the recovery of masculinity:

> Another of the major strengths of the nonviolent weapon is its strange power to transform and transmute the individuals who subordinate themselves to its disciplines, investing them with a cause that is larger than themselves. They become, for the first time, somebody, and they

[272] Ibid., 785.
[273] Mahatma Gandhi, quoted in Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Studies in Gandhism* (Calcutta: Indian Associated Publishing Co, 1947), 162; quoted in Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, 709.

> have, for the first time, the courage to be free. When the Negro finds the courage to be free, he faces dogs and guns and clubs and fire hoses totally unafraid, and the white men with those dogs, guns, clubs and fire hoses see that the Negro they have traditionally called "boy" has become a man.[274]

Gene Sharp explains this amazing transformation as a dialectic between an "improved self-image" and "action against the stratified system," suggesting that acting improves self-image and improved self-image makes cooperation with the denigrating system, its "behavior patterns" and "rules," more difficult.[275] While at the beginning the actionists may require encouragement, training, discipline and other means to control their fear, after participation a stage occurs in which control of fear is no longer necessary—the people simply cease to fear.[276] Such a state, according to Gandhi, is already freedom.[277]

And the development of such courage is already the natural remedy for that humiliation which is both the root and most poisonous fruit of oppression. As King puts it, summarizing a position of Paul Tillich's, "Courage is self-affirmation 'in spite of'...that which tends to hinder the self from affirming itself."[278]

In fact, at least from Gandhi's point of view, the development of this courage, again, with a masculine inflection, was a primary goal: "the aim of the *satyagraha* struggle was to infuse manliness in cowards and to develop the really human virtues, and its field was the passive resistance against the government of South Africa."[279]

Gandhi often identified such courage with "true" strength, the strength to punish. Only given this could there be a possibility of pure principled nonviolence:

> There is no love where there is no will. In India there is not only no love but hatred due to emasculation. There is the strongest desire to fight and kill side by side with utter helplessness. This desire must be

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[274] Martin Luther King, *A testament of hope*. (HarperCollins, 1986), 349.
[275] Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, 784.
[276] Ibid., 782.
[277] Mahatma Gandhi, quoted in Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Selections from Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1948), 205, quoted in Sharp, 781.
[278] King, *Testament of Hope*, 512; King did not provide an original source for this idea, but compare Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 3: "The courage to be is the ethical act in which man affirms his own being in spite of those elements of his existence which conflict with his essential self-affirmation."
[279] Mahatma Gandhi, *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, ed. Raghavan Iyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 307.

satisfied by restoring the capacity for fighting. Then comes the choice.[280]

These are not the images we normally have of Gandhi and King and their preferred mode of principled nonviolence; we normally idealize them as committed to principled nonviolence in all circumstances.

Gandhi suggests that different demands are made for people in two different states: absolute nonviolence for those who, as Gandhi suggests, have assimilated the non-violent spirit and cannot be humiliated, and violence, if necessary, for those who have not. Might this imply the need for a different kind of "frank dualism in morals," not between the personal and the social, but between those who can be humiliated by aggression, and those who cannot?

This is also the same trajectory as in Fanon, of "becoming human"—of overcoming humiliation—this way crucial to both Gandhi and King—but Gandhi had this crucial difference: if you have already "truly imbibed NV" etc.—you can no longer be humiliated.

However, in fact, the practice of nonviolence both demanded and revealed previously unknown reserves of self-esteem and courage in those involved. Gandhi and King both spoke of the importance of courage in response to this pervasive humiliation, and many commentators have spoke of the miraculous ability of nonviolent mass action of any sort to bring about such courage. For instance, Nehru describes the change effected by Gandhi on the Indian people as a change "from a demoralized, timid and hopeless mass, buried and crushed by every dominant interest, and incapable of resistance, into a people with self-respect and self-reliance, resisting tyranny, and capable of united action and sacrifice for a larger cause."[281]

Freedom for Gandhi is "when we learn to rule ourselves. It is, therefore, in the palm of our hands. Do not consider this Swaraj to be like a dream. Here there is no idea of sitting still." And, "we can see that, if we become free, India is free." Swaraj for Gandhi was much more than an object of research: it was something that had to be experienced for one's self, bringing about ethical transformation.

Gandhi describes the key to his technique in *Hind Swaraj*:

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[280] Mahatma Gandhi, quoted in Ved Mehta, *Gandhi and His Disciples* (New York: Viking Press, 1976), 183; quoted in Jonathan Schell, *The unconquerable world: Power, nonviolence, and the will of the people* (Macmillan, 2004), 130.

[281] Jawaharlal Nehru, *India and the World: Essays by Jawaharlal Nehru* (London: Geo. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1936), 173; quoted in Sharp, 786.

> A man who has realised his manhood, who fears only God, will fear no one else. Man-made laws are not necessarily binding on him. Even the government do not expect any such thing from us. They do not say: 'You must do such and such a thing' but they say: 'If you do not do it, we will punish you.' We are sunk so low, that we fancy that it is our duty and our religion to do what the law lays down. If man will only realise that it is unmanly to obey laws that are unjust, no man's tyranny will enslave him. This is the key to self-rule or home-rule.[282]

If principled nonviolence is not primarily about inducing change in the other, the real opponent in principled nonviolence is the idea of opponents, the dynamic of the zero-sum game of morality and power. But in principled nonviolence the terms may be reversed. We must be able to wish for our enemy to be in our position, and we in his or hers, like Rawls's "veil of ignorance"—an extension of the golden rule. It is the mode of "persuasion," or rhetoric, in which we would wish our "enemy"—perhaps mistaken in her or his position—to act towards us.

According to Gandhi, principled nonviolence is the optimum weapon against modernity, exactly because it is the sort of weapon we would wish our enemies to use against us:

> If this kind of force is used in a cause that is unjust, only the person using it suffers. He does not make others suffer for his mistakes. Men have before now done many things which were subsequently found to have been wrong. No man can claim to be absolutely in the right, or that a particular thing is wrong, because he thinks so, but it is wrong for him so long as that is his deliberate judgement. It is, therefore, meet that he should not do that which he knows to be wrong, and suffer the consequence whatever it may be. This is the key to the use of soul-force.[283]

For Gandhi, nonviolence is not about what in the West is usually referred to as "peace," that "condition of public order secured through the surrounding proximity of fear, punishment, and power." It is not about "the avoidance of death, the furthering of the public interest, or the improvement of the world."[284]

As Raymond Aron put it in his work on peace and war: "since . . . peaceful relations occur within the shadow of past battles and in the fear and expectation of future ones, the principle of peace . . . is not different in nature from that of wars: peace is based on power, that is, on the relation between the capacities of acting upon

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[282] Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, 92, E-book.
[283] Ibid., 91.
[284] Uday Singh Mehta, "Gandhi and the Common Logic of War and Peace," *Raritan* 30, no. 1 (2010): 150.

each other possessed by the political units."[285] Peace, he emphasizes, although it may signify the absence of war and violence, does so by relying on the very concepts which in another situation promotes war and violence. It is, he writes, "a hyphen in the logic of power."[286]

Unlike violence, or strategic nonviolence, principled nonviolence does not intervene in the world to make something happen; it does not have a product; rather, it is rather an attempt to transpose the encounter between purported opponents out of the realm of "power over" and into the realm of relationship, or "power with," to employ the understanding of peace scholar Johann Galtung. All the same, as Judith Brown notes, Gandhi believed that [principled] nonviolence could radically change all parties in a conflict, "protecting the integrity of each and leading both to a greater vision of the truth."[287] The distinction between means and ends is crucial for Gandhi. He asserts that

> When there is no desire for the fruit, there is no temptation for untruth and *himsa* (violence). Take any instance of untruth or violence, and it will be found that at its back was the desire to attain the cherished end.[288]

By letting go of "ends," Gandhi removes himself from the mainstream of political thought. But perhaps the focus on ends is yet another aspect of the regime of secularity. Often, it has a form like this: violence, planned out, has the goal of intervening in the world and transforming it; that is, it seeks to intervene in "the chain of cause and effect." In contrast, as Asad notes about the American Civil Rights movement,

> King extends the experience of pain—like Gandhi before him—from sympathy to compassion, and makes it relevant and effective within a particular secular state. At the same time, in tension with this project, is the demand for the redemption of subjects, that they vindicate their human status and join the universe of free, equal, and sovereign individuals.[289]

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[285] Raymond Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations* (Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1967), E-book.
[286] Ibid.
[287] Judith Brown, "Gandhi and Civil Resistance in India, 1917-1947: Key Issues," in *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present*, ed. Adam Roberts and Timothy Garton Ash (Oxford University Press, 2009), 47.
[288] Uday Singh Mehta, "Gandhi and the Common Logic of War and Peace," *Raritan* (Summer 2010): 151.
[289] Ibid., 150.

There are crucial differences between principled nonviolence on the one hand and strategic nonviolence and violence on the other, and there are still crucial moments when even in the descriptions of King or Gandhi we see something close to a valorization of agency and individuality appear, usually as a contrast to humiliation. For Sharp, the mode of strategic nonviolence, including a strategic nonviolence in the moral or symbolic realm, is by far the crucial factor in its effectiveness. As described above, this is a function of power—depriving the opponent of support and legitimacy. In contrast to Gandhi and King, he believes that converting the opponent through self-suffering is usually of minor importance. Sharp outlines three ways that nonviolent action can succeed politically: through conversion, accommodation and coercion. Conversion means that the opponent has come over to the actionist's view of the situation, such that they make the political changes asked without reservation. Coercion means that the changes are made, because in Sharp's model, such a degree of cooperation with the opponent has been withdrawn and the opponent no longer has a choice but to capitulate, although they would go on fighting if they could. The middle term, accommodation, means that the opponent could conceivably go on fighting, but has decided that it is most expedient to allow the actionist's demands to be met.[290]

For Sharp, coercion is the primary factor in effectiveness. Nonviolent coercion can serve to impede the functioning of the economic and political system, and the defiance is no longer able to be controlled by the opponent's means of repression—so the opponent will come to realize he must accede to the demonstrator's demands.[291] More specifically, nonviolent coercion attacks various sources of political power, depriving the opponent both of intangibles like authority, morale and information, but also human and material resources.[292] Sharp puts it in terms of "will"—to what degree is the opponent's will blocked?[293] Alternately, the actionists may seek to build up an alternative community, parallel institutions that both provide material services and drain away legitimacy from the opponent. Gandhi's "constructive program" had this effect.

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[290] Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, 741.
[291] Ibid.
[292] Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, 453
[293] Ibid., 742

In contrast, violence, as used by a state, even though it allows coercion and the temporary imposition of state's will so long as it is employed, ultimately undermines the state's power. In Arendt's view this is so because true power requires willingness to obey. Violence is able to destroy power, but it cannot create it; only legitimate authority can do that. Legitimate authority encourages willingness to obey, and thus creates power, while ultimately violence can ensure obedience only so long as the violence lasts.[294] The use of violence by a state against its own people is a sure sign that its reservoirs of true power have run dry. Sharp draws throughout his work on Hannah Arendt's reflections on the nature of political power.[295]

Perhaps surprisingly, Sharp allows that conversion through self-suffering nonviolence is a real phenomenon. Nevertheless, despite this ambivalent attitude toward conversion through self-suffering, Sharp describes at length the factors that serve to promote and impede this mode of nonviolence. He suggests that at first the opponent is unlikely to be aware of the changes that are taking root. He quotes Gandhi as suggesting that this process is "three-fourths invisible," with its effect "being in inverse ratio to its visibility." When the opponent has begun to be aware of "inner conflicts," "the conversion process has already reached an advanced state." The opponent has been set in "a new world which requires that he reconsider many things."[296]

Sharp, drawing on George Lakey (who in turn has drawn on Freud), argues that this kind of conversion depends on "feelings of identification" with those offering principled nonviolence, which "requires a new perception of a common quality between the two groups," fostered by the courage, truthfulness and receptiveness of the actionists. Such positive qualities help the opponent to view the actionists as truly human, a view without which no conversion is very likely.[297] As Sharp notes, quoting Richard Gregg:

> To be willing to suffer and die for a cause is an incontestable proof of sincere belief, and perhaps in most cases the only incontestable proof.[298]

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[294] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harvest, 1970), E-book.
[295] Gene Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist: With Essays on Ethics and Politics*, (Boston, MA: Sargent, 1979), E-book.
[296] Ibid.
[297] George Lakey, "The Sociological Mechanisms of Nonviolent Action," *Peace Research Reviews* 2 no. 6 (December 1968): 19-20; quoted in Sharp, 710-11.
[298] Gregg, *Power of Nonviolence*, 47, 133; quoted in Sharp, 721.

For her part, Hannah Arendt scoffed at the value of "self-sacrifice", and the idea that it is "the best proof of 'intensity of concern" or of "the disobedient's seriousness and his fidelity to law."

COURAGE

"Courage" is considered by Gandhi, King and others to be a key factor in principled nonviolence. But can there be courage that is not some sort of achievement of an autonomous individual?

> "What do you think?" Gandhi asked. Wherein is courage required - in blowing others to pieces from behind a cannon or with a smiling face to approach a cannon and to be blown to pieces? Who is the true warrior - he who keeps death always as a bosom-friend or he who controls the death of others? Believe me that a man devoid of courage and manhood can never be a passive resister.[299]

Courage was central to the practice of principled nonviolence, in Gandhi's view, but all the same he still saw it as part of a larger ethic/practice, developed over time. He wrote repeatedly throughout his career about what comprised this ethic. A simple formula was that it was necessary to "observe perfect chastity, adopt poverty, follow truth, and cultivate fearlessness."[300] Elsewhere, among his vows and observances, he expanded for his ashram residents the list of essential, interconnected practices: truth, nonviolence, "palate control," non-possession, non-stealing, physical labor, *swadeshi* [buying locally], tolerance, fearlessness and the removal of untouchability.[301]

Joseph Alter locates such a concern with developing the strong, courageous citizen, who has already achieved personal *swaraj* [independence] within a network of practices involving the most minute details of nutrition, hygiene and exercise. Alter refers to "a form of cultural politics wherein the primary concern was to decolonize the subject male body and remasculate its effete character."[302]

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[299] Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, 93.
[300] Ibid., 75.
[301] Mahatma Gandhi, *Vows and observances* (Berkeley Hills Books, 1999), 29-33.
[302] Joseph S. Alter, *Gandhi's body: sex, diet, and the politics of nationalism* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 125.

In King's view, *agape*, unselfish love, is at the root of courage. It is motivated not by personal like or dislike for the person, but by "God's love for us,"[303] and by the need of the other person.[304] It does not include loving any evil deeds the person does, or personal friendship.[305] It is disinterested, as the love of Jesus was.[306] Peeling away the layers of idealization, the love expressed in principled nonviolence no longer appears as something naive, "sentimental" or "affectionate." As King emphasized, Jesus said "love your enemy," not "like your enemy."[307] Perhaps we all too often love too from within secularity, where love is an accomplishment, an ornament for our narcissism, something we earn, deserve and use to armor ourselves. Instead, perhaps, from a position of lack and emptiness, love is more like seeing clearly even our enemies, and seeing for the first time the imbrication of causes that have led to this place of enmity. A seeing that is the basis of compassion.

CONCLUSION

As one of my committee members kindly noted, I attempted in this thesis "to take violence and read nonviolence."[308] It shouldn't be surprising that such an approach might lead to distortions and misunderstandings. In addition, I perhaps seem to have trafficked freely in Orientalist and otherwise essentialist tropes that were unacceptable in anthropology fifty years ago. On top of the fact that nonviolence so often seems to be a combination of soft thinking, mysticism, naiveté, and mysticism.

Just for the record, I am committed to radical democracy and so do not wish to provide support for ideologies destructive of human dignity, freedom, flourishing, etc. I stand against all attempts to demonize Islam. But it must be said that I am promoting my "vision" of the good in an unusual way. Most notably, by attempting to find the basis for an Islamic nonviolence not in the seemingly most pacific aspects of Islam (as many have attempted), but in those aspects of Islam that are, from the perspective of Islamophobes everywhere, the most violent: those of so-called "political Islam."

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[303] King, *Testament of Hope*, 140-41.
[304] Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride toward freedom: The Montgomery story*, Vol. 1. (Beacon Press, 2010), 105.
[305] King, *Testament of Hope*, 335.
[306] King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, 104-5.
[307] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Loving Your Enemies," Sermon delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, November 17, 1957. Accessed at https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/loving-your-enemies-sermon-delivered-dexter-avenue-baptist-church.
[308] Dahlia Gubara, to be precise.

For the bridge to be sturdy, it needs to address even the position of Islamophobes, if possible.

The central task of this thesis was the building of a bridge. Or to be more realistic, to begin to scout the land on each side of the strait. The bridge I envision is between Gandhian "principled nonviolence" and the "political Islam" of Sayyid Qutb. This is a work of translation, of each tradition, for the other, using (sometimes essentialist) language of each side.

Why is this bridge important? Because there may be few other options for confronting the juggernaut of the modern liberal state. I personally am not as anti-modern as Gandhi or Qutb, but I share with Asad and many others as profound unease about the certainties and the trajectory of modern liberalism. (Asad writes that it is an open question whether modernity is "an inescapable fate to which one must bend or a paradise that invites us to enter."[309]) The seemingly immanent environmental catastrophe is in the forefront of my mind here. I do not have much company in my position. For a thinker such as Mahmood Mamdani, and of course most others, the modern liberal state is very nearly a self-evident good. And to be anti-modern even in a qualified way to is put oneself in a questionable, reactionary sort of company.

The first task was to employ Asad's "anthropological skepticism" to critique principled nonviolence and "de-secularize" it, at least in one key respect: subjectivity. As I see it, the subjectivities articulated with secularity tend to have some commonalities and homogeneities (just as the increasingly secularized world is tending toward certain shared homogeneities).

Much of my personal background is in psychoanalysis, and in my earlier dissertation I attempted to employ a theological and psychoanalytic frame to critique principled nonviolence.[310] Ultimately, I do not believe the attempt was successful, primarily because of the amount of theoretical baggage required, and the difficult in reconciling it all together. In the present thesis, I attempted to use an Asadian perspective on subjectivity where I previously employed psychoanalysis. I believe that Asad's historicist and anti-interiorist stances enable a much stronger dialogue between these two "religious" traditions. If we use some sort of Freudian

[309] Asad in *Powers of Secular Modernity*, 348, E-book.
[310] John Charles Roedel. "Love is Not a Strategy: Reconsidering Principled Nonviolence." PhD diss., Graduate Theological Union, 2011.

unconscious, it creates chimeras. Even in Freud, reason is still primary. Asad's approach is cleaner, simpler, and ultimately more straightforward. Ockham's razor.

I have argued that secularity as ideology enforces a systemic blindness in not only many of the ways we think about the world and ourselves, but also in the way we perceive, feel, remember, etc. That is part of the meaning of Asad's use of "tradition": it emphatically exceeds the conscious resources of the subject.

Given my history and social position, of course I am writing primarily to an audience of white liberals. I would certainly agree to the extent that white liberals are key impediments in the freedom of many worldwide. Among that audience hopefully there will be some more knowledgeable about Islam and Qutb than I who can decide if there is anything of value in my thesis for Islamic traditions.

My psychoanalytic orientation also means that a certain "hermeneutical key" is crucial for interpreting this thesis, namely, what I term "active" versus "passive" agency. An "active" sort of agency seems to be a self-evident good. But *prima facie* of course we want to make our desires manifest in the world; for that to happen, we must have power, we must have an active agency. An armored, self-possessed subjectivity (a la Descartes or Kant) exchanging information with other armored, self-possessed subjectivities, is not a model that I find very helpful. Because the Cartesian / Kantian subjectivity is so profoundly rooted and widespread, and its existence nearly forces a certain conception of the person, and of how influence between persons takes place.

The crucial insight to this project, common to both psychoanalysis and Asad and Mahmood, is a conception of subjectivity and agency that is not so sure of itself, and is always suspicious of certainty. It has more in common with literary techniques than with much of the social sciences. Self-evident certainties should be investigated for their connections to power.

Saba Mahmood, for instance, rejects the notion that "an individuated consciousness" comes before bodily practice which then uses that consciousness to achieve some sort of "cultural particularity." Both she and Asad follow Foucault in affirming "subjectivation," whereby "the subject is formed in both identity and agency by the very procedures and circumstances that subordinate it."[311]

And as Mahmood emphasizes, "power dominates, but it is also productive."

[311] Foucault, *Foucault Reader*, 177.

These traditions are part of what Foucault terms "knowledge of the body" and elsewhere, "the political technology of the body": the skilled employment of practices to shape "virtue" and create a certain sort of subjectivity. All of this falls under Foucault's heading of "A Micro-Physics of Power."[312]

I am not trying to give an account of how these "arrangements of power" are constituted, although I allow it is quite relevant, as much as I am trying to contribute to the bringing about of a new arrangement of power.

In summary, I have offered in this thesis only an odd "way of looking," but one that may point out previously unseen possibilities for living together. I am not primarily offering an account of the way things are; I wish to catalyze change. Thus the work can only be suggestive. I ask that it be taken as a somewhat distracted attempt at translation. And no doubt a project of immanent critique rarely ends with a sense of decisiveness!

[312] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 25-26.

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